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CAPT. OLIVER P. M. SQUIRES

CAPTAIN SQUIRES' COMMONODDITIES

OLIVER P. M. SQUIRES



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CAPTAIN SQUIRES'
COMMONODDITIES

CAPTAIN SQUIRES' COMMONODDITIES

IMAGINATION OR THE MOST OF ME

Herein dear reader I lay bare,
"The most of me" to you I dare,
In this confession to expose
The best of me—and I disclose,—
A multitude of good and bad—
And honest like, the best I had;
But if my thoughts and ideas live,
I have perhaps much more to give—
For deep—so deep within my heart
Lie hidden, pleading that I impart
To you—the things that dwell—
'Tis with reluctance this I tell,
But it seems I must obey desire,
That leads my thought-steps far and higher,
Than I to now have e'er presumed,
To pluck from vines, the flowers unbloomed.

With "Most of me" I now depart—
From accustomed paths, a timid heart,
Self-conscious brain and falling eye—
For I have changed—no more do I,—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

No more do I fear that the critic's frown
Will tend to keep my courage down;
For I will have my spirits rise
And look him squarely in the eyes.
For criticism oft is just,
One needs but follow and to trust
Him of all for his intents,
Are not so aimed that confidence,
Should be so bruised and 'welcome death,
Because he breathed his natural breath.
No I expect that I shall be,
Improved and helped by his scrutiny;
I mean to have him show my flaws,
Then I'll repair the broken laws—
And I would have him know that I,
Recognized the man as he passed by.

It is 'mongst friends—familiar friends—
That confidence so reluctant lends;
To see or know from where you came—
Whence came your learning—your right to fame—
Am I not right when I so state,
That far from home one should elevate,
For do not they through native eyes—
More than your work they criticize—
Your acts and deeds—even humble birth—
Till one can eat his share of earth.
Is it to friends one has always known,
One takes himself when he feels alone,
To find some cheer in his distress?
No; but to those who know him less.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Some time has passed since early youth,
Refused or could not grasp the truth;
I am not young or yet so old,
But time is ripe that I unfold,
What I have thought and seen and see—
What is no doubt "The best of me"—
For there remains and seems to lurk,
The saviour of man, the desire to work,
And when man by his efforts please
Himself, 'tis then that others cease
To be a burden. This is contention
Or philosophical invention.
When man looks down from lofty heights,
And sees the great and lesser lights,
Then he by rule habitually,
Makes comparisons, that he may see
Himself—to find his proper place—
Then to maintain or speed his pace.

What would—or could—a man not do,
If he had the will; and if he knew
That if himself he but believed,
Duties would be more than half achieved.
If he said—with confidence—I will;
And determined that he would instill
The words "I Will," he would invest,
And in due time become possessed,
Of cherished hopes so strong that he,
Would reach his goal eventually.

There is no path so mean to tread,
As the lukewarm effort to get ahead;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Nor is there one so hard to please,
As the unsatisfying life of ease.
No man or men e'er gained a prize
By looking on through envy's eyes;
Nor will a man at all succeed,
Who does not realize the need.
And need is but a blazing fire
That makes more brilliant his desire.

When I started out I simply wished;
But soon I found I really pushed.
Now wish and push must work together,
Alone they wilt in any weather,
But when determined they combine,
No other two can undermine.
Each proposition has its laws,
Cause and effect, but mostly cause;
Cause it is that builds the fire—
That accounts for acts—and to inspire
The mind, the soul and even heart,
And conjunctively each do their part,
And in relation assistance lends
To bring about effective ends.

God gave to man some useful tools,
But did not supply the beasts and fools;
As man is in His image wrought,
He furnished him the tools for thought.
They are but tissue. 'Twas His intent
Man should assist their development—
For God intended man to wield,
This magic power over wood and field;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He gave that man might rule the earth
And decreed men equal at their birth.
So if in quality the same,
And only different in name,
Man is simply man and is possest,
With equal chances—like the rest.
Environment however makes,
Too vast a chasm and man mistakes,
And allows his native intelligence,
To confuse for lack of confidence.

Don't call me coward, that would not do—
Don't call me fool—though if you knew,
I feel I am yet I disclaim
Any such addition to my name;
Don't call or think of me as such—
For opinions often differ much—
And if I pin my hopes to you,
And follow and accept your view—
And take for facts what may be true—
If I did this would I not be,
The very things you think of me?
Should man not work and persevere
To do the task that to him is dear,
And with a will—and too with might—
When circumstances lead aright?

Men cannot read themselves so well,
To know what things within them dwell;
They cannot know—yet feel the fact,
That drives them forward, and to act,
Even tho some precedent has shown,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

The virgin rock 'a stumbling stone.
What's written in the book of fate,
Cannot be read until too late.
Where is the man who is so wise
Who sees himself thru future's eyes?
No one can know—can only feel,
The things with which he has to deal;
But when some unknown power leads,
He alone can claim—unowning deeds;
For does he not but do as bidden,
The will of this great power hidden?

That which makes failure in a man,
Is the not doing when he can;
Or when by no real effort tried,
And has not used the means supplied.
Failure is but to know the cost,
And in acquaintance with the lost.
Just as to fail—is to confess—
Tho be a step nearer success;
And as succeeding really bares
A breast exposed to wounds and cares,
Tho life sometimes is much depressed,
At last is in great honor drest.

I stand before you simply man—
The same as you—for by a plan—
We are by principles the same
And only different in name.
I do not claim the right to preach,
Nor do I know how much I teach;
But have 'mongst circumstances found,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Self-confidence is mostly sound.
And self-reliance seems to be,
A sure enough necessity.
Without the two no man will know,
Just when to start or where to go—
By knowing these resultant thought
Has self-subordination taught.
I claim that we have many flaws—
As have our statutes and our laws—
But changes in these are always made,
When imperfections are displayed.
So man must work to find the route,
By which he happier moves about;
And though he goes from zone to zone,
He travels generally alone.
When one however proves that he,
Is governed by sincerity—
And has by perseverance hurled,
His message to a sleeping world—
He will when repetition shakes,
See that his world at last awakes.

TWELVE YEARS IN HELL

'Twas the fifteenth of November—I remember well
the date—
I was working in the stables and now 'twas getting
late;
Tho not so late as I had thought—the clock showed
only three—
But because of the early darkness seemed later than
that to me.

Winter was coming early, a mixture of rain and
sleet,
Made walking most impossible as it crunched be-
neath my feet;
Trees had lost most of their leaves—nothing no
more was bright—
The beautiful hues of autumn had early taken
flight.

In the house the lamps were lighted tho still mid-
after noon,
A storm was surely on its way and would be there
very soon;
Pigs squealed in their prisons—horses tramped and
neighed—
Cattle chased 'round the strawstack in half serious
fashion played.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Chickens went to an early roost—for clouds made
dark the sun—
And all the farm's inhabitants seemed to know that
day was done.
Then just as I expected the wind began to blow,
And the worst night of the winter came with its
first fall of snow.

Snow-flakes fell in blotches—like angry winds were
blown,
And against the doors and windows as if by hate
were thrown;
And stick it did just where it lit, half melted in its
fall,
And soon as far as could be seen was painted over
all.

Beating—matting 'gainst the fence till rose a drift
of might,
Clinging to everything exposed—all colors turned to
white—
Shapes however slender, even posts and grapevines
grew,
And soon lost their identity in an old world changed
to new.

That night—there came a summons from a neigh-
bor who lived alone—
A man who once was friendly and whom I'd always
known.
So with my family in the car—a little after eight—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I drove through that storm and snowdrifts, then
through my neighbor's gate.

Nervously and awkwardly—like a man long lost
from men—

He began to tell his story—you should have heard
him then;

I will try to tell the tale he told in the language
used that night—

The fifteenth of November—when the world was
painted white.

* * * * *

“Now friends I'll tell the reason why I have called
you here—

Tho it may not seem important like it did to me
appear—

I want to lay before you what for years alone I
knew,

After which I'll ask your counsel and advice on
what to do.

“I want you all to listen to a tale to all unknown—
For the first time I will tell it tho twelve years have
come and flown—

Since I knew and it concerns me—all the details of
a crime,

But never have I disclosed it tho I've known it all
this time.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

"You may wonder—yes I thought so—on your
faces it is clear—
Ask no questions while I tell it—draw your chairs
close to me, here;
Make no move if you are frightened—only listen to
me tell—
Then you'll know and shun or pity one who's lived
twelve years in Hell.

"Once I had a friend who lived in—well that part
I won't relate—
He was unknown in this county tho he did live in
this state;
Seems some how it makes me nervous—talking to
you people here—
Telling you this tale, relating, why I walked twelve
years in fear.

"Twelve years this day—at midnight—our old
fashioned door-bell rang—
And it kept its clatter going with a bing-bang-cling-
te clang;
Out of bed I sprang excited in my night clothes to
the door,
And a man—or something—stood there tho com-
pletely covered o'er.

"Of his features not a whisker—not an eyelid did
he show—
Head to foot he was enveloped all in black just like
a crow;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

'What can be your errand, mister, this late hour to
my place?

Step in where it's warmer, remove your cloak and
bare your face!

"As he stood there—more I questioned—'Are you
hurt or fallen ill?'

With the door so widely opened—lightly clad—I
felt the chill;

Still he stood there like a dummy—not a word his
call explained—

And I waited till my patience was extremely tried
and strained.

"As he answered not a whisper—not so much as nod
his head—

There came the weird suggestion, 'was this thing
alive or dead?'

Now I did not fear the living—feared no thing
that drew a breath—

But a mighty scare came to me, was I face to face
with Death?

"If 'twas Death that stood before me—why to me
then had he come?

With no warning—save the clanging—with that
hellish silent tongue;

God on high—I said in anger—tho I shook with
trembling fear—

If this thing must pay a visit, why in hell has he
come here?

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

"I endeavored then to question but my body grew
so numb,
That my voice and jaws had failed me and I, too,
was stricken dumb;
Face to face—like mummies standing—he outside
and I just in,
Tho I could not speak a sentence I sure swore like
hell within.

"I was frightened and I never had been scared so
much before—
But I tried by inward cursing, drive that devil from
my door;
All I did was unavailing, then I changed and begged
in prayer,
And I asked the Lord to help me chase that thing
a-standing there.

"Never by a word or token—not once shake his
head or nod—
Then I thought I was rejected 'cause I cursed then
called on God;
Fear struck deep her talons in me—chilled by cold
and icy sweat
Down my body ran like rivers till my clothes were
wringing wet.

"Shaking like one with the palsy I gazed with awful
dread,
To discover I determined if that thing was live or
dead;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Back I quickly staggered, reeling—through the
hood I saw, beneath—
Staggering backward—stumbling—cringing; It was
Death, I saw his teeth.

“Where were eyes they now were missing—what
was mouth was now a grin—
And the grin of death was on me—just outside and
I just in—
Then there came to me a madness—changed from
what it was before—
I remembered there was lying a long dirk beside the
door.

“Dirk or dagger—knife or carver—its long blade
was oft admired,
Useful only in a crisis and its use was now inspired;
Not by choice but circumstances—forced on me by
extreme fear—
And my mind crazed by excitement gave me leave
to use it here.

“Like the beauty of a serpent always was it to my
eyes,
I detested and abhorred it—always did that thing
despise;
Then I prayed—God give me power—help my
weary legs to stand—
Help me to no longer cower—give me strength to
arm and hand.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

"God forgive me—I am human—give me now the
help I need,
Give my cowardly footsteps courage so that I God
can succeed;
Tho my tongue no words had uttered—cloven, use-
less, cold and stiff—
I edged sideways—hoping—praying—thinking of
but one word—if.

"Nearing all the time the weapon—then its hilt I
quickly grabbed—
With one motion I un-sheathed it and that thing as
quickly stabbed;
Twice and thrice I drove the dagger—human like
it turned and ran—
Tongue now loose I screamed defiance—screaming
like the crazy can.

"Quick to start he soon was flying and I followed
quick and fast—
But my strength already weakened could at best but
seconds last;
Time and time again I struck him—then fell—my
strength was sapped,
It was then that I discovered, at the hilt my knife
had snapped."

Trembling and with great emotion, at the last
word snapped, he raised
His eyes toward the fireplace and upon the mantel
gazed.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Tears streamed down his cheeks so hollow, and
which had so deathly grown,
Till now unlike the man I knew or that I'd ever
known.

“There folks upon the mantel is William Shake-
speare's bust—
Now inside there is a hollow, it was there I quickly
thrust,
That old scabbard and the handle, then in crazy
fiendish glee,
I chuckled and I talked to him, so confidentially.

“I felt that I had found a friend, who would my
secret keep,
Then dragged my weary bones up-stairs, to bed, but
not to sleep;
Sleep never has been welcome ever since that awful
night—
It is then that I have nightmares which have filled
my soul with fright.

“Now today there came a letter from a lawyer in
the West,
And it says that in this manner has a friend of mine
confessed—
‘Tho he is dead and buried, he arranged before he
died,
To show that he repented for an act unjustified.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

“ ‘He never hoped forgiveness—and tho he suffered
too—
He has left his every dollar and possessions all to
you.
And by this act—his last on earth—to prove his
good intent,
Bequeathed to you his property by will and testa-
ment.

“ ‘He told me all the details, how he came to you
one night,
And dressed for the occasion nearly killed his friend
by fright.
When he saw what had resulted—and knew he was
to blame,
He grew stiff he said, and rigid like and could not
speak his name.

“ ‘Now he asked that I be careful to get his story
right,
So I put it all on paper, what he said occurred that
night;
He said, tho you were frightened, you were scared
no more than he—
But he asked that I have you explain, “That dagger
mystery.”

“ ‘He saw you sneak toward him—and he knew you
were insane,
He saw you grab that scabbard—the knife and then
the pain—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

As you struck and drove that dagger he felt it cut
and tear,
And he said he thought of nothing but to get away
from there.

“ ‘Out through trees and bushes—he ran for more
than life—
He ran from you a maniac with a terrible murder-
ous knife;
He never knew you quit him—but from loss of
blood and breath—
He fell and with the knowledge—he was stabbed by
you to death.

“ ‘He felt his life’s blood trickling from every
wound he bore,
Then he became unconscious and of course he knew
no more;
He came to in a farmhouse and some good farmer’s
wife
Tried to learn why he had talked so much about
some awful knife.’

“ ‘Now friends there’s the solution—I have asked you
here to be,
The judges and the witnesses that will clear this
mystery;
That bust of William Shakespeare—I believe that
it can tell—
The reason why he did not die and me twelve years
in hell.’”

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He took then from the mantel that plaster-of-paris
bust—

Then up into the hollow one hand he slowly thrust,
With perspiration dripping, from that cavity he
drew,

The scabbard, and the handle, and what we all but
knew.

From the sheath he then extracted—just as if de-
pended life—

And laid upon the table a murderous looking knife.

LITTLE JIM'S REQUEST

There is nothing more ennobling this side of King-
dom come,
Than to see a father training up his boy to be his
chum;
There is nothing shows the character like the atti-
tude of youth
To fraternize with father, for it symbolizes Truth.

This tale is told of Little Jim and his worth while
chum—his dad,
And seldom are such partners seen—a father and
his lad—
But maybe Jim was different—he was not strong
like some—
And perhaps that had something to do with making
dad his chum.

Jim's father was a busy man and a little late that
night,
But they acted like—the boy and he—after long
separation might;
Their devotion if mere human came directly from
the heart,
And it seemed nigh to sacrilegious to watch them
play the part—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I should not say they played it—so unconsciously
sincere—

For it seemed like something sacred and yet does to
me here.

I had heard of such things rarely—such mutual love
and joy,

But it never came so close before as this father and
his boy.

Jim's blondish—curly—tangled hair was hair no
comb could tame,

His mother tho just loved it—his father's was the
same—

He had big eyes which were sky blue but a sadness
lingered there

That never seemed to go away—'twas a soulful kind
of care.

After lunch Jim took his father's hand and led him
to his chair—

He wanted to ask a favor he said—in a pleading
kind of air,

Then shy like he hesitated but he climbed upon his
knee,

And in his father's face he looked—so sad and wist-
fully.

“What is your little favor Jim? Don't be scared
my little man,

You know that I will grant it if a human being
can—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

You know Jim there is nothing that I would not do
for you—

Whatever you or mother want—I surely will put
through.”

Then Jim with voice so quivery asked a favor of his
dad,

The hardest proposition that he had ever had—

“Next Sunday I’m to join the church—I want you
to go along—

I want you to be there with me—and when they
sing the song—

“You take hold of my hand and I’ll take hold of
yours—

Then we both will join together and when the
preacher pours—

You wipe my face to make it dry—and I will dry
yours too;

Wasn’t it a teeny favor, dad—that I wanted to ask
of you?”

Little Jimmy’s father sat with wonder in his eyes—
He heard that little favor asked with pained and
shocked surprise;

The boyish—baby frankfulness that clothed his
small request,

Was mingled with the innocence with which his
prayer was drest.

He could not know how deeply had his little ques-
tion cut—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He could not know the magnitude that it had grown
to, but—
Of course he could not answer no—nor could he tell
him yes—
Tho he—himself—tho then unknown, thru Jim
God came to bless.

Sometimes it takes a childish voice unthoughtful
minds to teach—
Sometimes it takes a little child an untouched heart
to reach;
Just a little touch of innocence can change a path
long trod,
From a thoughtless or indifferent one to the right-
eous one of God.

As it takes but little sunshine to melt the falling
snow—
And just a gleam of innocence the proper way to
show—
It was Jimmy's proposition that brought his dad the
thought,
To grant his little favor was to do the thing he
ought.

Jim's father was commercially a man of good re-
pute,
His heart was just and kindly—no woman, man or
brute—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

With whom he came in contact had reason to
complain;
Tho exacting it was with reason and with un-
superior mien,

He mingled with his workers—in esteem and high
respect,
Was held by all who knew him—which he could
by right expect;
Regarding matters of the church he lent no active
hand,
He believed but since his childhood days had felt no
stern demand,

For his presence or influence—or himself an example
set,
That was calling for all the prominent as it is calling
yet.
But allowed his wife the burden of religious themes
the teaching,
To Sunday-school she always went and always
stayed for preaching—

And taught each day the little feet of his only son
the way—
And taught him early in his life how to worship and
to pray;
He stayed at home and smoked his pipe and read his
paper thru—
In divers ways he passed his time as thousands like
him do.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He never felt he needed help that un-seen powers
teach—
Or spiritualistic lessons—those which the pastors
preach—
But regarded it their business—from professional
point of view,
To try outshine each other as 'tis often claimed
they do.

“He knew the competition that bordered close to
hate—
And jealousies—'twixt the varied sects—that
blocked the common gate.”
He reasoned too and honestly—for in morals he was
clean—
“He knew of members of the church who used it as
a screen.”

Unselfishly—unenvious he allowed them go their
way—
His soul yet knew no strengthening—with pro-
crastination lay—
As migratory as the fowl that goes from zone to
zone,
His thoughts would wander here and there like
before the winds were blown.

Unassembled and unsettled, his future was un-
solved—
He refused to think on any thing that beyond
the grave involved.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Of no denomination, established sect or plan,
But claimed that his religion was, being just to
every man.

However now a shadow came—and dark across his
way—
He saw strange visions in the night and with him
thru the day—
He heard a little trembling voice—he saw a plead-
ing face,
And before it he was powerless—it followed every
place.

Himself he could not understand why he lost his
appetite—
He knew of no disorder that kept him awake at
night—
But changed he was and worried and like a shrink-
ing coward,
He fought to free himself from that which held him
overpowered.

The days passed on and Saturday had come and
passed away—
'Twas a terrible kind of suffering that he bore
throughout the day;
That night he feared to face his son whom he cher-
ished more than life,
Suspicious of conspiracy he avoided too his wife.

Jim had his little bath and then, so clean and fresh
and bright,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He hurried to his father to kiss and say good-night;
With self-control he drew his boy closely to his
 breast,
But could not speak for bursting was the pressure
 in his chest.

Without a word he kissed his boy and with his eyes
 closed tight,
He muttered unintelligibly when he would have
 said good-night;
Then when his wife and boy had gone—and alone,
 there by a chair—
He made that great confession—he talked to God in
 prayer.

There was many a glance that Sunday morn towards
 Little Jimmy's pew,
For besides Jim's loving mother was Jimmy's father
 too;
For people always notice—that's why the promi-
 nent should—
Set the right example for it tends to make folks
 good.

So Little Jimmy's favor was just like all the rest—
It was granted by his father and so both of them
 were blest;
They joined the church together and when they
 sang the song,
Jim smiled and winked at mother—for father was
 along.

IF

If the fullest circumstances of each man were fully
known—
And we could see the produced crop from the seed
that he has sown ;
If the details of his actions would the real truth
reflect—
And before us lay conditions, and we could these
inspect—
If opinions could be traded for facts so we would
know,
What a mass of grief and troubles would the expo-
sition show.

If masks of smiles were brushed aside and man's
very soul lay bare—
And his conscience and thoughts could be exposed to
the purifying air,
If hearts could be extracted and with leisure we
could scan—
What surprising revelations would confront the
eyes of man.

If it were a crime for thinking thoughts of im-
morality—
And if thoughts were all in concrete form so that
every one could see ;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And if against the statutes of the state this were a
sin—

And if we had institutions to lock all these within,
Think how vast would be the acreage and how long
the prison wall,

To receive and guard the sentenced and to house
and shelter all.

If you were called to view the friends who had
gone on before—

And if heaven and hell were side by side—just a
step from door to door,

And then you looked in heaven for those friends so
dear to you,

And you were told by angels there—of your friends
—they never knew—

Then surprised you stepped across the way—just to
be satisfied—

And in hell you saw them standing—trembling side
by side—

What a shock it would be to you and your confi-
dence so rare,

To see them not in heaven—but in hell awaiting
there.

THE DISCOVERY

When I first gazed into your face,
I felt so strangely weak—
And I heard a little silent voice,
Urging me to speak;
You were I knew no stranger
That I'd never known before,
And I felt—what seemed a promise
Of just what was in store.

I knew at last I'd found you—
Tho you had never guessed,
And tho I'd been so long denied,
I knew I now possessed
The answer to my yearning—
At last there came to me,
Just the thing that I had pictured,
In human reality.

I guessed that you had recognized,
My every move and thought—
And tried to avoid detection—
By others being caught.
For nothing is one half so plain—
Or so difficult to hide,
As the secret of admiration—
Or thoughts so drest in pride.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And too I feared that what I felt—
 Would cause unguarded look;
Revealing by move or gesture—
 And disclose an open book.
I wondered then as I do now,
 If what I feel is shared—
And if in hearts of all the hearts—
 That you have ever cared.

When you are gone—and far away—
 When you I cannot see—
I'll wonder if you are thinking,
 Or ever have of me;
'Tis then I'll wonder—for I do
 More than you'll ever know—
Hide love beneath a countenance,
 Where eyes can never go.

THE COMING

Out of the No Where—into the world—
 Into a greater life—
Out of the darkness with flag unfurled,
 From oblivion and petty strife.
Into a day of a brighter sun,
He comes like a blast of a morning gun.

Out and away from his self-cramped soul—
 Into a world of bliss;
Into a world of a higher goal,
 From a dungeon dark to this.
Out of a world of bleak distress,
Into a world of earned success.

Only his efforts and ambition's light—
 Backed by hope and pride;
And a knowledge that day is but half night,
 But he did his best and tried.
Only a man but he knew the earth,
And he dug in a spot that promised worth.

Only to prove that labor is drest—
 Clothed in a robe of deeds;
Work of the kind that he liked best,
 And the planting of fertile seeds.
Into the world came success to console,
To prove that destiny—men control.

FRIENDSHIP

No one would ever have believed
The half I deeply feel;
No one could ever have conceived
The wounds that will not heal.
There is no mortal move I make,
But what reminds of some mistake.

There is no one who ever erred,
Who knows more than I learned;
There is no one who ever cared
To have what I have earned.
There is no one who ever sought,
Or dreamed the things that I have thought.

I never had a single friend—
But what that friend have prized;
Nor ever did I just pretend,
By acts or thoughts disguised.
If you but knew I never swerved
When mutual confidences served.

Some may have thought me hard to please—
When they some wish implored—
They might have found some way to ease,
A mind not in accord.
But if they failed, was I in fault
If I withstood their mild assault?

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I feel that I am but a bush—
That friends can friendly shake;
And I will grant each little wish—
And each his toll may take—
For have I not to each one shown
To have me is to forever own?

And never did I friend desert—
I value more than gold;
Nor by intent have ever hurt,
But try to win and hold.
I never understood the man
Who does not keep them if he can.

But it is true my friends depart—
Those whom I'd love to keep;
And like a dagger in my heart,
It cuts both wide and deep.
But if we never knew the night,
We could not then so love the light.

To show that I appreciate—
My friends I thus caress;
Forgetting thoughts akin to hate,
And ask our God to bless.
And if you cannot understand,
Let's walk and think—we hand in hand.

THE REPAIRED HEART

It may be that your cause was just—
I have yet to apprehend ;
And it may be when ground to dust,
An injured heart will mend,
If it again rebounds in me—
Then I will gladly take
And with the strength of sympathy
Receive for old times sake.

Before the altar worshipping,
I begged the light to show—
To tell me of each and every thing,
That I had a right to know.
What caused you leave your work undone—
Turn traitor and unkept
A vow—desert work just begun,
While the unsuspecting slept.

For reasons—and best known to you,
Ungrateful from the start,
You did not see your journey through,
But broke an honest heart.
Alone I've wandered o'er the path,
Where we so often walked—
In solitude and harbored wrath
I reasoned and I talked.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I held my tongue—no bitter word,
Some day you would explain;
The deed that caused my blood to curd,
Upon the sands of pain.
Not for the crime that you have done—
Not for deep disgrace,
Nor yet because another won—
And better fills my place.

* * * * *

The wound that caused my blood to flow,
Is healed and calloused now—
Of this I wanted you to know,
When it came about and how;
She came to me when April shed
The cold and winds and snow,
And when she came thoughts of you fled,
Her voice was sweet and low.

With hers—your face could never cope,
And loving, kind and true—
With her you'd have no chance or hope,
Against those eyes of blue;
I wish you luck—my will will read,
I will thank you publicly;
For your great act—for your great deed,
That you have done for me.

TO MY COMPANION—MY PIANO

Dear old piano if you but knew what great respect
I have for you—
Could you but know how much I prize and see your-
self as thru my eyes;
If you could hear my praises true, 'twould be a
compliment to you.
O good old piano could you see emotions rise and
fall in me,
And understand and truly feel that which I hold
for you so real—
Even tho unheard, no words of mine could praise a
friend more genuine.

What friends we've been since early age found me
beside you to engage
You and your services—then bound and what com-
panionship we found.
Remembering struggles, what despair—what dis-
couragement and care;
How we have labored—we alone, your sympathetic
heart of tone,
Has been an influence so rare that none can with
its worth compare.

Since I first came a little boy, the soul of you has
brought me joy;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

So true has been your vibrant chord, as close companions we have pored
As if together we would reach to learn and then each other teach.
I learned in time your worth adore and with the time I loved you more,
To me you are so really real, I know your smile, I seem to feel
A fidelity more staunch and true than I dependent, could to you.

Good old piano, you have stood more than your maker thought you would;
With all my cruel and rough abuse and thoughtless and without excuse—
You humored when I seemed to ignore the consideration bargained for.
Like some mistaken mother sees her offspring err, it is to please.
And when I did so rudely pound, you made my scales and chords to sound
As if real music when I knew, all melody was due to you.

When despair so often seized my mind, great comfort I would always find;
You seemed to know I was depressed—had by some unknown power guessed.
Think of efforts, work and tears, through all the long and tiresome years,
Years of practice, yet I progressed, mastering details till I possessed—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

As I improved, you seemed to, too, though new to
me the old to you.

Now as I ramble o'er your keys what was so difficult with ease—

And when I travel slow or fleet, your tone is marvelously sweet—

And comes to me like chiming bell and holds me in entrancing spell;

Your liquid voice, how it inspires and comforts soul and all desires.

Thanks, good old piano, you have taught what I have learned, that which I sought—

You taught and helped ideals rise, still help the doubtful neutralize;

Far more than human friend could be, my good old friend of harmony.

CAN I BE BRAVE WHEN I'M AFRAID?

O am I brave when I'm afraid
When I am awful scared,
To try some stunt some kid has made,
Or follow where he dared—
Can I be brave when I won't try
To climb up trees ever so high?

Can I be brave when I won't try
To climb to beam or rafter,
In some old barn way up so high—
And listen to their laughter—
If I should fall my life I'd lose,
Can I be brave when I refuse?

Can I be brave when I'm in fear
To run away from school?
For of course my mother—she would hear—
Would not I be a fool?
Now wouldn't I be a silly goose,
When I couldn't give a good excuse.

Do you think that it's brave or fair
To pick on kids—or hurt
With hard snow balls or pull their hair,
Or to pepper them with dirt?
Do you think they're brave—who think it's fun
To scare little kids or make them run?

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

One day there was the meanest bunch
Of bigger boys than I—
And I just sort o' had a hunch,
As some little girls came by;
When with the girls those kids got smart,
I sailed right in and took their part.

I told them first to let them be—
And what I'd surely do;
Then they left the girls and jumped on me—
But believe me 'fore they's through—
They found out that it wasn't fun—
I made that whole bunch quit and run.

The teacher says in Sunday school—
"Fear, boys, to do wrong"—
Then has us say the Golden Rule—
Then we sing another song.
But what I'd like so well to hear—
Can I be brave when I'm in fear?

BURNING THE LETTERS

The task is done—the task dreaded the most—
Though I knew some day it must be;
I destroyed by fire my friends by the host,
And friends who were faithful to me.

One by one—with much sadness I gazed—
And admiringly gave a caress—
And then each one by the flames was razed;
And it seemed like a sin I confess.

I saw the flames so greedily reach,
And draw to its maw with a roar—
Like watching a ship in distress from the beach,
Being hurled by the waves from the shore.

Friends I have known—in reality dear,
Who brought me a message of love,
And made me feel so happily near,
Like sentiment sent from above.

Years have passed—for years I have held—
And priceless I valued them all;
But the time at last came and I was impelled,
To destroy them, though bitter as gall.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Tears I have shed, and laughs I have had,
When I read—in seclusion reviewed—
Sometimes I'd be happy and then I'd be sad,
As something forgotten renewed.

Farewell good friends, I'll never forget,
You were and remain much to me;
I prized you always and I prize you yet,
With loving sincerity.

Good-bye old letters from friends of the East,
From the North and the South and the West;
Your love is secure, I love none the least,
You are on my memory pressed.

BLESSEDNESS

There's a feeling nigh to aching,
As I think of you to-night;
And my heart seems nigh to breaking,
Though there is a strange delight—
Coming o'er me as I wonder,
And o'er it long I ponder
Till it seems I see you yonder
Through the darkness of the night.

Through the dark I seem to see you—
Though I know that I do not;
In my mind there is a clear view,
Of the land forget-me-not.
Forget-me-not, your choicest flower,
Often have I heard the name;
While we passed a sweetest hour—
Now like you I love the same.

Things like these are always clearest,
When with you some way connect;
And so often do they, dearest—
And just when I least expect.
When I walk along the road-side,
Or when driving in the car,
All at once it seems my thoughts glide—
And before me, there you are.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

You're the sweetest recollection,
Of what was and yet exists;
When alone in retrospection,
Your dear image still persists—
Often do I see with clearness,
Though your visits all are brief—
I am cheered so by your nearness,
That it neutralizes grief.

To me grief is but a sister,
Like a twin to happiness;
One is with us then we miss her—
Then the twin has come to us.
You have caused me oft to wonder,
And on this I often ponder;
Then I see you way off yonder,
And I call it blessedness.

THERE IS A GRAVE—A WOODEN CROSS

Where battles raged and trenches ran—
Where hearts have ceased to beat;
Where hopes once fell and rose again,
Where past and future meet,
There is a grave—a wooden cross—a number or a
name,
Which holds all but the memory of my son's heroic
fame.

Where men once stood in battle line,
Where souls have taken flight,
Where stood the profiled son of mine,
Outlined upon the night.
There is a grave—a wooden cross—a number or a
name,
Which holds what once was mortal and a patriotic
flame.

Where flowers now bloom—the cold winds blew,
Its song with icy breath—
The song whose words became so true,
The prophecy of Death.
There is a grave—a wooden cross—a number or a
name,
That holds the silent listener—an immortal son
became.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Where fallen has my soldier son—
There let his body lie;
Where he heard the roar of bomb and gun—
Where he went so far to die.
There is his grave—a wooden cross—a number or
his name,
Where his presence is his glory—his unquestioned
right to fame.

But give to me from off his grave,
A little sacred sand—
'Twill closer bring my boy so brave,
Just a bit of France's land.
There from his grave—his wooden cross—a number
or his name,
That glorified his memory and sanctified the same.

MY LITTLE RED CROSS NURSE

The Wounded Soldier's Story

You have asked me for a story of the doings "over there"

But I know so very little, I do not think you'd care,
For what I would have to tell you—though of course some fellows do

Have just all kinds of anecdotes and some are really true.

But I don't know—I never was much good at telling things—

But if you folks will pardon me, I know of one that brings

To me a lot of sadness—and I hope some day to see
The subject of this story, if that can ever be.

We never had a real chance to do things over there—

You know sometimes I really thought we were not treated fair —

And I have heard that generals felt just the same as I,

But they, of course, could understand and knew the reason why.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

We were not to blame for being blue, for we had
 real regret,
But finally at Verdun we got our chance—but yet—
The part that I, myself, displayed, compared with
 some, was small;
So naturally I hesitate to talk of it at all.

Yes—we surely did go after them—I remember
 laughing loud,
At the scared looks and expressions, for we had
 those Germans cowed;
But we had only started after waiting for a year—
For I was long with Pershing when he told La-
fayette, "We're here!"

I saw but little fighting for something sudden
 came—
And I guess that you will understand that I don't
 feel quite the same,
And I don't look just as I did when I started out
 that day—
But that's another story—and I was going to say—

I remember when we went forward of going on the
 run—
And really it was comical,—though I would not
 call it fun;
Then I never knew what happened though I guess
 I just fell out—
Even now I can't quite understand just how it came
 about—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I never knew how I was hurt, nor did I know how
serious,
For mostly I have been told I was more or less
delirious;
Then came a time and so it seemed, I would come
and then I'd go,
In and out and back and forth—a sort of to and
fro.

Already I felt home-sick for it seemed for months
I'd lain,
And had suffered quite a little, with something kin
to pain;
To heal up wounds—such as I had—does take a
little spell,
But time went altogether, too slow to suit me well.

I never had been sick before or knew just what it
meant,
To ever get down-hearted or to suffer discontent;
But I'll own I did get peevish when I finally came
to,
To learn that I was sick in bed, and that I might
“pull through.”

“Pull through” I thought, “Gee Whillikens” what
do they think they've got?
Some kind of a weakling, or what—I wondered
what;
Then I started in to tell them, but when I tried to
speak,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

For the first time in my life I knew, what it was to
feel weak.

It seemed my voice was soundless and my tongue
was stiff and thick,
I was I knew as helpless as a "dough-boy's swagger
stick"
I knew—I thought—just where I was, the room
was cool and light,
And it seemed I was at last awake, from a century
of night.

I looked about—although my eyes, to hold them
open, hurt,
And for all the world they felt like they were just
chuck full of dirt—
I saw long rows of iron beds—"Some convention
come to town,
They are putting them in the corridors, in the lobby,
up and down."

And then I seemed a little child—I felt so strangely
young—
And it seemed I heard a lullaby that I'd often heard
and sung;
'Twas just a childish ditty that came and went
away,
Then I saw some kids—some youngsters—with
whom I used to play.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

It had been some time since I'd romped about—
 seemed good to play once more—
So it was, indeed, with a happy heart that I raced
 out through the door;
In and out it seemed I went—till tired at last I
 lay,
And I heard my mother talking, she was telling me
 to pray.

So with heavy lids and aching eyes, I said that little
 prayer—
That children say and soldiers, too, they say it
 “over there”—
“Now I lay me down to sleep, I ask of God my soul
 to keep;
If I should die before I wake, I ask of God my soul
 to take.”

Kids often came to visit me—kids I actually had
 known—
They stood beside my bed and stared—I was sick
 and all alone—
But I enjoyed their visits and I know I tried to
 smile—
And then they'd go but back they'd come, every
 little while.

Their familiar smiling faces—though sometimes
 they were sad,
Remained the sweetest memory up till then I'd ever
 had;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And though you may not understand, they brought
more love and tears
Than I had known in all my life, nigh on to thirty
years.

Days went on, then at last there came a cheer that
haunts me now;
And if I ever can forget, I swear, I don't see how.
I waked one morn and 'possum-like, I lay so still,
like dead;
And I felt the gentlest fingers moving gently o'er
my head.
I felt the bandage lifted with such heavenly kind of
care
That I wondered if it were a human or an angel
working there.

For bending o'er me stealthily, but bending o'er me,
stood
A thing that God invented and He made His patent
good;
For in this world no duplicate, but He could e'er
devise,
And I watched and studied closely, through playing
'possum-eyes.

I watched and felt her gently touch and smooth my
whiskered cheek,
I saw a worried face and brow and lips that seemed
to speak;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And then my face was gently bathed—and though
asleep I feigned—
'Twas by surprising effort from a smile or to speak
refrained.

That wonderful expression, on a face just full of
pride,
And so bravely independent—as if the world de-
fied—
But listen, here's a secret; that nurse I am proud to
own
Was an Indiana schoolmate—a girl I had always
known.

Imagine now if it were you—and think folks, but a
breath,
Was trying to hold together and was keeping you
from death;
Imagine, then, it is the link that you have come to
know
Was holding, holding, holding; refusing to let go.
I don't know how to tell you but listen till I've
told
How a single breath was welded to another breath
to hold.

I lay upon my pillow and I saw a worried face—
I saw a changed expression and a new one take its
place;
I saw a look in her blue eyes—I saw a love sent
start,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And I knew that some discovery had quickened that
girl's heart.

I felt her fingers on my brow—my hair was back-
ward smoothed—

I felt her lips then gently touch—I felt my being
soothed—

I felt my body being soothed and throughout my
being went,

I felt the cobwebs being smoothed from my brain—
I was content.

But not for long—I lay there intending soon to
sneak

Another look o'possum-like and then to smile and
speak;

I waited and I waited—till at last no movement
heard—

No sound of footsteps moving—not even a whis-
pered word.

At last I grew impatient—though determined still
to lie,

For I knew that she'd be coming to see me by and
by;

An hour went and through the day I looked and
hoped in vain

Till it grew into a torture—a terrible kind of pain.

The pain was new and different—it made me heave
and sigh—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Sometimes I would feel like laughing and again I
would almost cry;
But with sad heart and aching I would my secret
keep—
With the shades of evening falling, again I went to
sleep.

Sleep came to me and also dreams, but healthy
dreams they were,
And all that night it seemed I dreamed and I always
dreamed of her;
She it was that hovered—and hovered always near—
Always smiling happily and it seemed she knew no
fear.

Once she came away out there—out there amongst
the smell—
Away out where the game was—then the bursting
of a shell
Scattered dirt and death around us, but out there
all the while
Was the Red Cross and my secret with her “How-
are-you-this-morning?” smile.

I knew I dreamed—I knew it—though my dreams
were passion wrought,
They were always dreamed half conscious and close
to guided thought.
Then morning came and through the day, until
again came night
I lay in bed and worried, seemed to know things
weren't right.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Then followed days and I was nursed by other ones
in turn—

And always I expected some news of her to learn—
And they were kind—and they all are—I cannot in
my praise,

But do honor and give credit, when I have a chance
to raise

My voice it is to honor all those girls who gave so
much—

And it's likened to His garment when a Red Cross
hem I touch;

So tireless, kind and loving that all of us who know
Will forever sing their praises wherever we may go.
And it is next to sacred when with calmness I
review,

For God Himself knows only the worth of what
they do.

But friends perhaps you'll gather that my nurse I
saw no more—

Whom I'd learned by meditation, her very soul
adore;

But a surgeon told me afterwards when I had
stronger grown,

Just the thing I had imagined—just what I might
have known.

That she was the mechanic who had by expert care
Made close to the impossible, but refused herself to
spare;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He said that she, when she was told I had a chance
so slight,
Declared she was determined to put up an awful
fight,
That if I had a single chance, she would help that
chance to win,
Then she tackled the condition—the fix that I was
in.

No use to tell you further, it is evident that I
Was by her devotion rescued—she would not let me
die;
But when she saw what she had done and knew I
was to live,
She learned what it had cost her—what she was
forced to give.

She applied and got a transfer and though I started
late,
I decided that I'd travel some—I will visit every
state—
And every other country—for this world is not so
large—
And I don't care to settle down since getting my
discharge—
For a while I'll play detective and I'll search until
I've found
That little nurse who made me and my whole world
go 'round!

TEN YEARS OLD TODAY

This is the day that you were born—
Ten years ago today;
Early in the hours of morn,
Outside was cold and gray.
I remember well the night before—
There by the shining hearth—
Throughout the night we waited for
The minute of your birth.

We watched the clock hands slowly creep—
Till God would set you free;
There was no time for rest or sleep—
But filled with sympathy—
With fear and care akin to pain
We waited through the night—
And hoped expecting much to gain—
That you and all be right.

Just as the sun—its face arose—
You came and worry flew;
I cannot tell—for no one knows—
How proud we were of you;
You were a boy—with skin so fair—
Your mother's wish complete—
Big eyes of blue and curly hair,
And O so cute and sweet!

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

How happy was your mother, lad—
So proud was she of you—
With her added care—no other had
More than she to do.
Then when at night we would retire
To well earned sleep and rest—
And I had fixed and banked the fire—
And asked that all be blest—

Often in the stilly night—
From soothing slumber waken—
Sometimes from hunger or from fright,
Or with some illness taken—
You'd wake us all up with your yell—
You ordered—we obeyed!
How often I could never tell
That she your fears allayed.

Listen, lad, and learn to think—
When danger 'round you trod—
Sometimes with life close to the brink,
Your mother worked with God
And saved your life—to her you owe
More than you can repay—
But much it is—I would have you know
And remember from this day.

You are but ten—and young in years—
Let this your mind impress—
Never cause your mother tears,
Nor from this rule digress.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

When years have passed and you are grown,
Your friend will be your mother;
Remember boy—you'll never own
Such a friend in any other.

Love your mother well my lad—
Some day you'll miss her face—
And thoughts of her will make you sad,
No one can take her place.
Come, dry your tears, ten year old boy—
I am glad you understood—
To see those tears would be a joy—
They would do your mother good.

MY MOTHER'S OLD PIANO

That old piano in the hall
Was my mother's dearest treasure—
From the time when I was very small,
It was her greatest pleasure.
A good musician—mother sang
A melodious soprano—
And when she played—great music sprang—
From that big, old square piano.

From many—many miles around,
Folks came to hear her play;
They loved to hear the music sound—
Those near and far away—
They came to hear my mother sing
Old songs in sweet soprano—
And her wonderful accompanying,
On that good, old square piano.

When I was grown I often heard—
When from the fields returned—
My mother singing like a bird,
Some song by heart had learned.
And O the sweetest melody—
Tho changed—still sweet soprano—
In perfect tuneful harmony,
With her big, old square piano.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Now when she died she willed to me—
Her music and diplomas;
A few old dishes and—let's see—
Books and a couple of chromos.
She also willed her mother's shawl—
And of course—that old piano—
But she could not leave the best of all,
Her voice—that sweet soprano.

For twenty years I have watched with care,
That sentimental treasure;
With it no value can compare—
Or in any manner measure.
But if I could play a single chord,
Upon that old piano,
I'd give great wealth—then ask the Lord
To help me sing soprano.

THE TWO LETTERS

A mother waited patiently as they are wont to do,
Her sun had sunk considerably for her life was
winding through—
Her allotted years—three score and ten—and cheer-
ful, brave and kind,
She waited for a loving son in Ireland had left
behind.

She lived in far America with a daughter that had
wed,
But was never quite contented for her thoughts
were always led,
Back across the briny sea—to the land of Shamrock
Green—
The fairest land to mother that she had ever seen.

The songs of native country, the rocks and winding
stream,
Would burst in visions mighty; and memories
'round her seem,
To carry back to yesterday and her wrinkled face
would smile,
At the thoughts she knew were fancies, of her dear
old Emerald Isle.

She attended church on Sunday—and often went to
mass;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

She knew most all the children where she was wont
to pass.

They learned to love this dear old soul—this stran-
ger in their land—

And often walked beside her, a-holding of her hand.

Into her sad—though kindly face—they peered and
wondered why,

This dear old soul so different, though smiling
seemed to cry;

And tears so hot and burning rolled—'twas impos-
sible to tell,

Just why or for whom in sympathy—they so sad
and loving fell.

I have seen her take a ragged waif and press it to
her breast—

I have seen her gaze toward the sky and ask that it
be blest;

Then wipe its little soiled cheeks with fond and
loving care,

Then close her eyes and make the cross and murmur
words of prayer.

She always seemed like a lonely flower, some neg-
lected garden grows,

Which bows its head beneath the sun and smiles
when a cool wind blows;

Which seems to live expectantly and hoping hour by
hour,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

That the winds will bring it food and life in cool
refreshing shower.

She lived it seemed so buoyed by hope, she laughed
when she was sad ;
By making others happy, she thought that she was
glad,
But deep beneath her smiling face—so far you could
not see—
There was a tugging at her heart that caused great
misery.

A card had come addressed to her—'Twas written
in his hand—
He'd enlisted in the army and was now in Verdun
land,
He was fighting there for righteousness and for the
good Old Sod—
She should not worry only hope and keep her faith
in God.

She felt—she feared he would do this—her boy so
strong and brave—
Could not refuse when he was called to help his
country save ;
Of reproach she never had a thought, for the son
whom she adored,
But she feared for both himself and her—though
her faith was in the Lord.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Day after day, night after night dragged over its
weary way—
She watched for the man who brought the mail, but
“No letter for you” he’d say;
The war then gripped with deadly hand—her life
was pulling out—
Though she often wondered, she never knew, what
the war was all about.

She heard that thousands fell each day and her
soul was filled with dread,
That he had fallen and was lost—she feared that
he was dead.
At last one bright and sunny day her mind was put
to rest—
Had ever a mother so happy been, was there ever
one so blest?

There came for her two letters—poor soul she
saw but one—
And by the familiar writing knew ’twas from her
soldier son;
The other fell upon the floor and beneath a chair
it lay,
As if fearing to tell its message or at least a while
delay.

God in most wondrous ways performs—the de-
voutly pure he shields—
And His power of loving watchfulness for the weak
and feeble wields,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And protects from needless cruel blows, gives
strength to mind and heart—
Yes even of the loving old does He become a part.

The letter read "Dear Mother, I have won a Vic-
tory—

I have seen that glorious Prince your Christ that
walked on Galilee;

"The war has brought me close to Him—He leads
us in this fight,

Just as God led before His birth the Armies of the
Right."

"No need my darling mother to shed one tear for
me,

I am so happy in your faith—it is sure reality."

"There is but little danger dear—(O pardonable
lie—

If she could have seen where her son stood, where
thousands daily die.)

"Say for me some little prayer when you this note
have read"

Smiling and in her hand his note, they found his
mother dead.

Once again in a wondrous way, God gave a fond
caress,

And saved that mother and allowed her to die in
happiness.

They found the other letter where it fell beside the
door,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And with eager gentle fingers the soiled envelope
they tore,
And opened up the missive; were surprised to say
the least,
When they saw that it was written by his regimental
priest.

This letter read—"Dear Mother—Sad news I
break to you—
"But please be brave until you read this little letter
through;
"Your son has gone to Heaven—for he has won
the right—
And he left us Dearest Mother as he bravely led
the fight;

"Please do not grieve too much I pray—and your
boy asked me to state,
That over there he'd watch for you—and patiently
would wait—
"Proud you may be the mother of that courageous
son;
"To have given birth and reared that man, has
God's Greatest Honors, won."

THEN I BECAME A SOLDIER

Written February, 1917

I have heard the sound of firing of a thousand
 roaring guns
In my mind I see the marching of a million invad-
 ing Huns;
I have searched beneath the surface—I have dug
 deep in the earth,
And have found the stolen secrets of the country of
 my birth.
And it makes my heart to shudder—and my mind
 grows tense and strong,
At the thought that we have nourished those who
 planned and did us wrong.

I have read deep in the future where un-done deeds
 are moored,
And have heard conspiring voices—laughing as our
 sides were gored;
Torn as with shot of cannon and with sword and
 bursting shell,
They have used their fiercest pieces, brought from
 the pits of hell.
And it makes my blood go boiling and I grasp my
 brand new gun,
And I swear I'll learn to use it 'gainst the treach-
 erous, cruel Hun.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

They have builded there a temple and have called
that temple Power—
They have watched the massive pillars rise, and
finished saw it tower—
Above all countries round about, until at last there
came—
What they considered good excuse to set the world
afame.
Then they started out to conquer and they acted
as they thought,
They were the chosen peoples and were led by "Me
and Gott."

In our pity for the stricken lands—our wounds
were left undressed,
While we lent our aid and sympathy to the weak
and much oppressed;
Then we learned how we were suffering—when our
sores began to run—
So we joined the side of righteousness that lasting
peace be won.
We will bear our wounds and sufferings and we'll
storm the Teuton's wall,
So that Justice and Humanity may forever govern
all.

"I HAVE A DATE, BOYS, FOR TO-NIGHT"

I have a date, boys—with a friend—
I can't stay out tonight;
To disappoint I don't intend—
That's neither fair nor right.

I promised, boys, that I would meet
This little friend of mine—
And I will see her face so sweet—
Just as the clock strikes nine.

Excuse me, boys, I'd like to stay
And have a little game,
And no one better likes to play—
But I have a little flame

Who will await my coming, boys—
I've said I would be there—
And no one lives who more enjoys
A nice, big, easy chair—

And to hold my girl upon my lap—
To hold her close to me,
To feel her heart-beats thump and tap,
And mine in harmony

Answering back each little beat—
Is a joy as from above—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

To feel her breath so warm and sweet—
You're right, boys—I'm in love.

You guessed it, boys—I don't deny
That I am smitten hard—
To see her face you would know why
No billiards, pool or card

Could make me break a date with her—
And she's a lady who—
Can make me feel just like a cur
Before an ev'ning's through.

She is so nice—the way she calls
Things to my attention;
She makes me see the deep pit-falls—
Though careful not to mention,

A single thing that might offend—
She seems to know that we—
Don't like to hear from our best friend
Even in sympathy,

Words of advice—for well we know
The proper paths to tread—
But she shows me the way to go,
And all the rocks ahead.

She does not scold or cry or fret,
But with her face a smile,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And she has never made a threat—
So I like the lady's style.

My wife—of course she knows about—
Although I 'most forgot her—
But free your mind of any doubt,
For it's my little daughter.

THE DIVORCE COURT

I sat inside a crowded room,
'Mongst people gathered there,
With anticipation full in bloom,
On faces harsh and fair.

I saw young men still in their teens,
And girls of tender age,
'Mongst those familiar with the scenes,
Enacted on this stage.

I saw the leer of hardened man,
The painted harlot bold—
One knows the members of that clan,
And needs not to be told.

I saw the gathering as a whole—
My eye the assemblage swept—
And my inner mind did so condole;
With pity for them wept.

I saw the judge from chambers come,
And calmly take his seat—
His presence hushed the noisy hum,
And ceased the shuffling feet.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I heard the testifying,
Of each witness on the stand;
And justice was relying,
On imaginations fanned.

I had no doubt perjury bold—
If not lies were close akin—
Selling souls—already sold—
By magnifying sin.

I saw a mother listening,
Like a tiger 'bout to leap,
At the wielder of the lash whose sting,
Cut reputation deep.

I saw a little child of three,
To its mother tightly hold—
It could not understand or see,
What the voice of future told.

Or why their presence in this place,
Nor of its mother's shame;
But wonderment was on its face,
And in trouble just the same.

I saw the lawyers pick and pry,
The witnesses to trip;
With tongues sarcastic, saw them try
By laying on the whip.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

A court of justice this was named—
Exploiting others' sin—
One hesitates then feels ashamed,
When he once gets within.

I sat among the curious crowd,
And felt a mild remorse—
Was by the judge's verdict bowed,
When he granted the divorce.

I WENT AND LICKED MY KID

I'm a-feelin' sad this evenin'—for I went and licked
my kid—
And I'm sort o' sad and sorry like for what I went
and did;
Time had come when all my lectur'n' to that boy
he would ignore—
So I figured when I did it, 'twas my duty—nothin'
more.
But I'm feelin' kinda guilty—just as if I was to
blame—
What was meant for good 's a boomerang to my
conscience just the same.

I have always been particular 'bout the actions of
my boys—
And have always tried to teach them to have a little
poise;
And not forget that other folks deserve a little
thought—
To be careful 'bout their carryin' on's—to do things
as they ought.
But I'm feelin' sort o' sneakin' for what I went
and did,
For I gave my boy a lickin'—I went and licked
my kid.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I have always sort o' hated folks who rule their
kids through fear—
And have said that folks who did that way, should
have no kids to rear;
That sometimes 'twould be a lesson if God would
let them die—
Then to the brutal parents, explain the reason why.
I couldn't see how they stood it—to such harsh
means employ—
But to-night I went and did it—went and licked
my boy.

I took him to the bed-room and I said, "Now take
a chair"—
He didn't think I'd lick him—least he didn't seem
to care;
I said, "I'm goin' to lick you, and I'm goin' to
make it sting"—
But when I went to do it, I couldn't find a thing.
I fin'ly saw my razor strop; "That was the thing
I'd use"—
But 'twas tied fast to the door-knob, and I couldn't
get it loose.

That caused exasperation—and I turned away to
smile—
With that darned kid a-settin' there a-watchin' all
the while;
I didn't dare to look at him—he seemed so much at
ease—
Like he might be enjoyin' it and was tryin' hard to
please.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Then I became self-conscious—him settin' there
so cool—

So cool, composed and patient, and me actin' like
a fool.

But still I worked a-pickin' at that stubborn knot—
The more I worked on that darned thing, the
tighter the thing got;

I fussed and blushed and worried—embarrassed
half to death—

Then got mad at that blamed thing and noisy
gettin' breath.

All het up—still workin' just as if depended life—
When Gosh! That kid, he handed me his gol-
darned rusty knife.

With that I'll own, I did get sore—I'd teach that
boy to scoff—

I gave that strap an awful yank, and the blamed
door-knob came off;

Straight at me that door-knob came and Oh! right
'bove my eye—

And hurt, Gee-whiz! How that thing hurt—so
much it made me cry.

But I had the strop, and then I said; "Don't think
you'll get away,

You're goin' to get that lickin' yet, you're gettin'
too bloomin' gay."

Well he got a sure 'nuf lickin'—but I'm not feelin'
right—

I feel just like I'd been in some disgraceful, low-
down fight.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

My eye is black, so I stay home—inside most all
the while—

While the rest of the folks—even that kid—look
wise and kinda smile.

It ain't no way to punish kids and I'm sorry as I
can be;

It's in-human, cruel and brutal. That's how it
seems to me.

THE DAISY

Once there was a daisy grew,
In a field remote from every view;
Alone it thrived in a fertile spot,
Unknown by all though not forgot.
As it unfolded maturely blown—
It could not know that God had sown
And decreed that it should live alone.
It flourished though beyond the wood,
Unknown—unseen in solitude.
Its little life was lonesomeness—
It never knew a fond caress—
It never knew it could take no part
And never dreamed it had a heart,
That throbbed and beat in rhythmic style—
Though sadness mingled all the while—
And melancholy its whole life through,
A lonesome sweetheart daisy grew.

It never knew the hand of man,
It never saw a sprinkling can
Its thirst to quench or face to spray,
No help received artificially,
'Mongst neighbors not in harmony;
Ungainly thistles crowded near,
And stock of milkweed too lived here—
And ragweed—ragman of the earth

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Usurped the land of the daisy's birth.
Here too lived stone and immense rock,
Which by their hugeness seemed to mock,
And ivy rank and clinging vine
Their uncouth neighbors would entwine,
But the daisy bowed its pretty head,
Closer to its secretive bed
And its heart in very sadness bled.

The sinking sun at day's conclusion,
Shone pink and red with great profusion,
And showed the master of the day
Was moving on its circuitous way.
Then darkness came like a magic sheath,
And covered all on earth beneath;
Then this brought forth the insect's song—
More lonesome made and the night prolong—
The croaking of the guttural frog—
The barking of a far off dog—
To hear these sounds that the darkness drew
More lonesome seemed—and it would to you—
To be alone in a lonesome land,
No friend or kin to press your hand,
And here at night 'midst falling dew,
A lonesome sweetheart daisy grew.

The little daisy bowed its head
Low and lower over its bed,
While the falling dew like chilling rain
Its little life began to pain.
'Twas ever thus by the stronger cowed—
Resistance useless so it bowed—
Through all the night this little flower

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Bent with the tears of a dewy shower.
As morning came of another day,
And night had passed upon its way,
Our little friend with clean washed face
Smiled at the sun with flowery grace;
And then the sun espying the dew
Proceeded to show what it could do
And beat with fierceness—of air not a breath—
Sultry and hot and withering, was it Death?
Never a sign of cool winds blew,
Here where our sweetheart daisy grew.

Sad was our daisy's little life,
Devoid of happiness, so full of strife;
What hope had it if its life retain—
In lonesomeness and saddened pain,
But hearken to this my last refrain.
The sun its fiery shaft had spent,
As if in wonder fulfillment
Of some mighty duty—nobly done—
Then disappeared the master sun.
Storm's mighty wrath and rushing fast—
Tornado's warning before it cast—
Soon covered all and darkness came
Like Noah's flood in Jehovah's name.
The wind with fury rent and tore,
All things that lived on earth before—
Here in the field of the loneliness—
That surely God had come to bless
With all his power of righteousness;
So that all who come may pause to view,
The spot where our sweetheart daisy grew.

THE THINKER

O list to the voice of the murderous clang—
Forever 'tis sounding its terrible bang—
Like sounding the knell when one is to hang;
And I think—think—think.

O for music—sweet music—to sound in the air—
To drive from my mind the monotonous care—
That relentlessly shackled my soul with despair—
And I think—think—think.

It is better to think—for thinking is life—
And I think of my children—I think of my wife—
I think of old labors—not knowing—called
strife—
And I think—think—think.

I think of the deed that has sentenced me here—
That took me away from all that was dear—
To a mixture of hells and perpetual fear—
And I think—think—think.

I think of my home—the place I was born—
The orchard—the meadow—the green fields of
corn—
The by-ways and pathways our foot-steps have
worn—
And I think—think—think.

Captain 'Squires' Commonoddities

I think of my mother—I loved her so well—
O what did she say when she heard that I fell—
And that I was sent to this terrible hell?
And I think—think—think.

It is said there's a God—I am wondering now—
It it's really the truth—for I cannot see how—
But I like to believe and my mind I allow—
And I think—think—think.

If the gates of the prison were opened today—
And I were given my choice—to go or to stay—
My freedom or prison—O what would I say?
And I think—think—think.

Would I walk out a free man before 'twas too
late—
Or stay in the prison and suffer my fate—
O help me decide—your answer I wait—
And I think—think—think.

O what would I do—if my freedom I found—
I would look as I felt—my conscience would
hound—
I would jump as afraid of every sound—
And I think—think—think.

Who would give me a job—in a factory or farm—
Would not they be frightened I'd do them some
harm—
Then drive me away for some fancied alarm?
And I think—think—think.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I am hardened to this—my body alone—
My children to men and to women are grown—
My wife if she lives—no more would she own—
And I think—think—think.

My mother no doubt—long years has been dead—
God bless her dear soul—let peace be her bed—
O had I but followed the path where she led—
And I think—think—think.

O why do I think—there are seventeen more—
With what I have served—makes one and two
score—
With twenty-three free ones I'll be sixty-four—
And I think—think—think.

I am thinking that God might send forth a dove—
With a message explaining—from His home up
above—
Explaining—exactly—what Christ meant by love—
And I think—think—think.

O listen they're shutting the ponderous door—
With its vibrant—metallic—its clamorous roar—
Some wretch of a human—they're making secure—
And I think—think—think.

AS WIDE AS LONG

Where the sunny side of evening sets its face behind
the trees,
By a slowly moving river—ever dimpling with the
breeze—
There's a church-yard rich in legend—far behind
the world's fast pace,
Back to past and front to future, lying weirdly face
to face,

With a village old and fabled—once the home of
Indian band—
Till the ever coming white man forced them west
across the land;
Buildings old and weather beaten—seemed to look
as always there—
Unkept lawns with natural beauty neither showed
neglect nor care.

Yards extended into neighbors' and the grass like
carpet grew—
Seemed to tell as does the Scriptures—do just what
you'd have me do;
Varied rose and other bushes vied with holly-hock
and such—
It suggested desecration for one uninvited touch.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

People moved in lazy fashion—with no cares it
seemed to be—

Out of date in eyes of strangers and of quaint sim-
plicity;

Religious mien—devoutly trusting—pastor—church
and God as one,

Unspoiled by sect as one they worshipped when
their weekly work was done.

From surrounding hills and forest—oak of massive
growth and beech—

Shadows came and mystery whispered—length'ning
arms appeared to reach

From the heart of brambled thicket—from the
gnarled and gaunted sage,

Rearing weirdly as if defying time and man despite
its age.

If you happen in your travels—and you reach the
highest land,

You will see the village nestling in the palm of
Nature's hand;

In a cup—and with a handle through which the
river flows,

Disappearing in its bending 'round a hill it slowly
goes.

Gurgling—rippling—onward ever, traveling faster
at the falls—

Murmuring—singing—mournful always, gliding on
where Nature calls;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Like one sits alone at evening—like the river's flowing dream—
Reviewing thoughts of joy and sadness, flowing slowly down the stream.

In the church-yard we were standing—by a grave as wide as long—
Here we read an odd inscription—inspired words of simple song;
Curious then to point of wonder—then we heard the tale unfold—
Heard an old time native tell it—heard a strange tale—strangely told.

Lengthy start will be omitted leading to the house of death—
Commencing only with the passing,—stilled forever heart and breath;
Here beside a creeping river—here where earth and heaven meet—
Here was told the simple story that I now to you repeat.

You have heard of mothers loving children born of her and part
Of her real living being, sharing both her mind and heart;
We can understand that ending—what must mean when stealthy death,
Severs soul and life from body, quick and silent at a breath.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Mother's grief is not surprising—and her story has
been told—

On a page in God's great day-book it is writ in
purest gold;

It is said that God endowed her more endurance
than was man—

Proves the wisdom and completeness and the vast-
ness of His plan.

Listen to a father's story—devotion greater too, he
sought,

Unmindful of the price he lavished more affection
than he ought;

Trained he had his eye and senses—'round about
his son entwined

Hopes and visions were enveloped, in an image were
confined.

Do you think that 'twas intended—like a miser
hoards his gold—

Thoughts to narrow ways confining, leaving empty
wisdom's mold?

Mature man who lives the broader, broader views
and bright conceives

Shadows dark, illumed by knowledge—likened unto
Autumn leaves.

Love's devotion or heart's possession though immor-
tal must control,

Passions for the life that's mortal—it contains a
fleeting soul;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Centre not a mind that's flexing—let it scatter, bend
and sway—
Bowling to the will of sorrow is but throwing life
away.

* * * * *

“Closed the door, did Neighbor Hawkins, then he
walked to me and said—
Go in Bill, 'tis you he's needin', for Little John is
dead.
Good God! I felt a-chokin'—I could not move or
speak—
Like a pup that's scared I quivered and I felt about
as weak.

Right at Hawkins I kept lookin'—then I saw big,
mannish tears
Down his rugged face a-runnin'—like they hadn't
done for years;
Though we knew young John was goin'—and that
God his soul would take,
We knew when he stopped breathin' that old
John's heart would break.

All the peace of Old John Taylor—ev'ry hope and
all his joy,
Like a sheaf of wheat were folded—held together
by that boy;
'Twas the same way with the youngster—just to
be a pal was born—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And just when he stopped his growin' from his
father's side was torn.

Now Old John—he was an orphan, where he came
from no one knew—

To himself such things he guarded—all he said
was guarded too;

I'm afraid that I can't tell it—as the story ought
be told—

For the tellin makes me trembly since with years
I'm gettin' old.

It is then I'm like a baby—when my feelin's get
me down—

Like the playin' of an organ, I don't want to be
aroun'—

But when no one is lookin'—then I like to hear it
play,

I have had a heap of trouble that makes me act
this way.

To that task I felt unequal—the smoothin' of that
blow—

That to Old John was so crushin'—what to say
I didn't know,

But I went inside the house then and I had always
tried

Bein' 'round in times like this was—when neigh-
bors were sick or died.

I went in and tried appear like—I was come there
to console—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But somehow I couldn't think of things to say to
 save my soul;
Old John just kept a lookin' and when he turned
 his head
I felt a whole heap better with that old man and
 his dead.

That death had so upset me that I could but little
 give,
Grief like that—there's no forgettin' if a hundred
 years I live;
Many times I had been able—cheer some husband,
 child or wife,
For the first time I was failin' in my sixty years of
 life.

Death is harsh on any person—one can't know until
 it comes—
But 'twas worse than cruel to Taylor for his boy
 and he were chums.
One would counsel with the other—then they'd be
 each other's pal—
I had known no case just like it and don't think
 I ever shall.

Now the date was set for Sunday and the funeral
 was to be,
In that church there in the valley—a place most
 dear to me;
Many years I there attended—my wife and chil-
 dren lie

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

On that hillside by the river and I hope to when
I die.

From the way Old John was actin' we felt some-
thin' sure would come—

What 'twould be there was no knowin' or where
'twas comin' from;

But his eyes, they looked like danger and another
thing was plain,

I was scared that he'd go crazy for at times he
looked insane.

Now were comin' friends and neighbors and out-
side they clustered 'round—

Claspin' hands and noddin' greetin's—as if 'fraid
to make a sound;

Show respect for both they wanted—for the livin'
and the dead,

Seemed they'd caught a touch of sorrow and nothin'
could be said.

A crowd came—then the preacher—and folks from
miles away

Gettin' there had walked and driven—and 'twas
nice that Sabbath day;

This boy and his old father had been liked as few
men are,

And it seemed that ev'ry body was their friend
both near and far.

Then arrived the time for leavin' and this part I
sure did dread—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

From the house the body takin'—the movin' of the
dead;
What it means you well remember—even though
you're reconciled—
When you see them back the wagon for a mother,
wife or child.

For to hearts already burstin' comes a lowerin'—
settlin' gloom,
And is mighty heavy restin' when they march away
from home;
Taylor's face was yellow ashy when they hid com-
plete his son,
And I thought his labor also was pretty nighly
done.

He watched them close the coffin and he writhed—
it gripped his soul;
I was watchin' and expectin'—God surely helped
control
His mind and all his functions—then a thing so
strange he did—
“Take out those screws, he ordered—and now re-
move the lid.”

Then with lit up face and features, out through the
hall he walked—
He asked them to forgive him, but in master fashion
talked;
“There will be no funeral here today; I ask you
all to go away—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I think though friends, after tonight, you'll see my
aim; it is my right."

Back he came with eyes a-flashin'—and to those
remainin' said,

"I'm not goin' to let them take him—he is still
my boy though dead;

Leave me now for time is flyin'—tomorrow you
may come—

I have got some private business with John my
little chum."

The like was never heard of—it seemed far more
than grief—

His puttin' off the funeral was most beyond belief;
Old Hawk and I kept watch that night—and no
stranger night could be,

And we witnessed things I reckon that but few
men ever see.

That night it stormed and thunder rolled across an
angry sky—

Lightning crashed and spit and struck all around
us, mighty nigh;

Old Hawk and I though not afraid of lightning or
thunder—

Had some mighty snaky feelin's—we couldn't help
but wonder—

About the storm we wondered—the wind it howled
and roared,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

We could see by lightnin' flashes and it seemed the
 heavens' poured;
But Old John, he never noticed—through all that
 storm he sat
Of far deeper things was thinkin' than what we
 worried at.

'Twas two o'clock—the storm had passed and rain
 dripped from the eaves,
The wind died down—we could barely hear its
 passin' through the leaves;
Quiet—calm—inside and out—then John began to
 talk—
He seemed a-speakin' to himself—his face was
 whiter'n chalk.

At last he walked to Little John—then in his hands
 he took,
That dead boy's face—his only son—and there he
 seemed to look,
For something that was hard to see—could he have
 sought his soul
That had been gone for these three days and long
 since reached its goal?

Could he have looked for signs of life—could he
 from long dead eyes
Expected recognition—that his boy might rec-
 ognize—
What e'er it was we'll never know—but we sat in
 silent dread—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

At last John Taylor raised his voice and this is
what he said.

“Well, son, you’ve gone and left me—I kept hopin’
that you’d stay
With your old dad who loved you, but they’re takin’
you away;
But son I’ll not believe it—not until I’m left alone—
And I’m goin’ to keep your body even though your
life has flown.

“When they took away your mother, John, and left
you in my care,
A little babe—so innocent—it seemed I couldn’t
bear
To have my wife—your mother go—but you came
and stayed with me,
And took her place and helped my heart forget its
misery.

“What friends and pals we’ve always been—I
loved you much my boy,
As you grew up my pride increased, you always
brought me joy;
Always kind and good to me—and I tried to be
good too,
But John I’ve asked permission to go along with
you.

“Most all my life I lived alone—no folks—no love
—no home,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

No place to live like you have had, my roof was
heaven's dome;
Good God is this a punishment for somethin' I have
done—
First my wife now little John—his mother and her
son.

“Must I go back a wanderer—an orphan boy once
more?
No one to love or be loved by—I could not this
endure;
I'm gettin' old—I've done my best—my best I al-
ways gave,
But now I'm done—I want to lie beside him in his
grave.

“I want to go—I have tried to do my every duty
well—
And Lord I know you'll understand—I don't know
words to tell;
But if my boy has gone to you and with you he
will live,
Let me go too—to be with him—will you permis-
sion give?”

For a minute he was silent—then he burst loud into
song,
Then said—“O John, I'm goin'—I'm goin' to go
along”;
With arms stretched high above his head—his face
toward the sky—
He said, “I thank you, Jesus, for sayin' I could die.”

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

His voice was slower—lower—we missed then what
he said—

He stiffened—swayed and tottered and fell across
the bed;

We raised him up and looked at him—a smile was
on his face—

So we made a grave as wide as long and right there
is the place.

THAT FAMILY 'CROSS THE STREET

While you're thinking on economy—how to make
your money reach—
And you try to put in practice what so many people
preach;
And it's become a problem—tho your weekly pay
is good—
With the price you pay for clothing and for coal
and rent and food—
And for all the things you have to buy and bills
you have to meet—
I wish that you'd explain to me "That family 'cross
the street."

I merely want to tell you that I think I draw good
pay;
I do not call it wages—but I call it salary.
From half past eight till half past five I try to give
my best,
It is then that real problems come that put me to
the test.
Sometimes I have to figure and to use a lot of care,
But I often think and wonder 'bout that family
over there.

I don't want to tell my troubles, for you've troubles
of your own,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And if you have no troubles, you're the first I've
ever known;

My fortunes seem misfortunes—and it seems 'twas
ever thus—

And believe me there are paydays when to beat the
band I cuss—

I try to make a practice to pay up without delay,
But I started out to tell you 'bout those folks across
the way.

There's a family living over there with seven in the
fold,

The man is just a laborer and he is getting old,
The children are too young for work—and all of
them in school—

While father wields a shovel or some such kind of
tool;

From six a.m. till six p.m. dirt mixes with his
sweat,

But how they manage to get by I haven't found
out yet.

For the kind of work that poor man does he surely
earns his pay—

Munificently for just mere work gets two dollars
every day—

I see him coming home from work so covered o'er
with grime,

And when I see him on the street I wonder every
time.

I'd like to get his recipe—I'd like to learn his
way—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I believe I could learn a lot of things, from this
fellow 'cross the way.

They must have coal to keep them warn—and coal
costs money now—
How he manages his furnace I wish he'd show me
how;
I'd like to see his table—what those people have
to eat—
How they portion out potatoes and how they serve
the meat.
To house and feed that seven—to clothe from foot
to hair—
I wonder and I wonder, 'bout that family over
there.

Now I'm getting serious—for "By Heck" it beats
the dutch—
For jobs compared I have that man a walkin' with
a crutch,
I do not spend my money in foolish ways of ruin,
And I'm going to cut this livin' cost or there'll be
something doin'—
It's a business proposition and that man I'm going
to meet,
And I'm going to have him teach me, how they do
it 'cross the street.

The pay I get is all I'm worth—tho of course I do
aspire—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And I expect as I improve to go a little higher—
But it taxes one's ambition when you're spending
 all you get,
To keep your growing family and it's not through
 growing yet—
I am going to solve this problem—with diplomacy
 and care—
I am going to get acquainted with that family over
 there.

THE CALLER

I did not ask her errand or the reason why she
came—
I did not think—nor did I care—as to whom might
be to blame;
That she was old enough to know (needs no wisdom
this to tell)
But this I knew—and knew well too—she tread the
brink of hell.

Before me she stood a sacrifice and the garb of
Chastity,
Hung by a single thread of golden Integrity;
But ere the mantle that once clothed—and clothed
yet as before—
Dropped by design or accident some unknown
power bore,
And as upon the wings of fate and with swift
decision tore,
What seemed just then a cunning net and thinking
seems the more.

She stood before me—and she stood—my answer
she would wait,
And as I glanced—with curious brow—and ap-
peared to hesitate,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

She caught my thoughts—at least it seemed my sluggish mind to read—

And as I tried my senses pull together and indeed,

This is a master's work to do when words all seem to strain,

To tumble, jumble to express—more time I tried to gain—

By gazing—thinking, my thoughts afar—and was this cowardice,

Was I a fool, was I a prince gaming with loaded dice?

Was I a traitor to a man, was he a man to me—

Should I consider his friendship? Or plain morality;

He was my friend—what was he now? Thoughts conglomerated pile,

But duty and respect for both held me for a while.

The seconds pass and minutes seem—they move so draggish slow;

I motioned the lady to a chair—but wished to God she'd go—

Or never had she come to me—for tho I was no saint—

But by dear sleeping bones I swear I had never borne the taint,

For it was taint that threatened me and would follow to my grave;

I could give no sanction or reject, not even my soul to save.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

She knew she had no business there—nor I her there
allow—

But by all the gods that I knew of I knew no
means or how;

I could not say there is the door—please go—de-
part—get out,

For I had a feeling that she knew, just what she
was about.

And I knew too—she also knew—these things we
don't forget,

I was not sure she knew my thoughts or how I
cared—but yet—

I knew enough of what she knew and she enough
of me,

For both had erred in judgment and compromis-
ingly.

As sunlight does when light winds blow, the cur-
tains mildly flick—

It darts across a darkened room like lightning and
as quick;

So does the vision of a thought—and yet defies the
tongue,

To put to voice, the thought express—it is in
silence hung.

With thoughts that came and went away and too
in silence mute,

I sat and gazed like condemning judge—I must
have seemed a brute—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

She came to me for sympathy, she came to me for
love,
Neither of these did she receive, I swear to Him
above;
I do not say I mastered myself—but more than
this degree—
She was but blind—I was paralyzed to immova-
bility.

At last she arose as if to go—her visit now was
o'er—
Glancing at me contemptuously she moved towards
the door;
She glanced at me with such contempt as if at
filthy dust,
Then slammed the door to accent her love turned
to disgust.
No one knew of her visit—in her home she took
her place—
And never since has my caller ever looked me in
the face.

THE DERELICT

The truth is—it did seem a shame,
And yet—one never knows—
When pretty Susan took his name,
Well—you know how it goes,

Things seem incomprehensible—
The way young folks will mate,
Like each were indispensable,
To a happy future state.

Well any way—'twas their affair—
And no one else should judge;
So all her friends—they ceased to care
Or her—her choice begrudge.

Then true to form Big Bill turned out
To be what people said—
Tho for months he kept her mind from doubt,
About the life he led.

She did her best—she babied him—
She humored that big beast;
And independent—sweet and prim,
Seemed worried—not the least.

She tried to make her judgment good,
And dreaded folks to know

Just what they all had understood—
He now was proving so.

Big Bill stayed out night after night,
And lie—what tales he made—
And she—she realized with fright,
The price that she had paid.

She stood it all—he always thought
She believed his explanations—
But more than once he had been caught,
In great prevarications.

But day by day her character,
Took on a different form;
Tho typical—'twas just like her—
A rebelling mental storm.

One night—when every thing was still—
And Bill had stayed out late;
Her judgment and her outraged will,
Bowed to revengeful hate.

She went into a den of shame—
Her life to contradict;
And Susan—at one step became,
And remains—a derelict.

THE INVENTOR'S COMPENSATION

Listen Justice, hear my tale; listen God and Man!
I would have you hear my story—hear me while I
can,
The common details relate to you—my strength is
fast abating—
Help me to live my shortened life—to die without
my hating.

Give me attention, is all I ask—I crave no gold or
pleasure,
That day is gone when earthly things, by anticipa-
tion measure;
I have no hope and no desire—I see my sun's rays
glitter,
And sinking as my cherished dream, sank cold and
dark and bitter.

'Tis God to whom I really speak—for Justice I
know you not—
And you my acquaintance never knew, or early me
forgot;
Your elbows I have often brushed through all the
years so fleeting,
I begged a smile, I craved a look and doted on our
meeting,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But high above my common way I heard your voice,
and singing,
But not for me were praises sung—no bells for me
were ringing.

And Man to you what can I say, so changeable of
feature—
You dare not meet me face to face, you deliberat-
ing creature;
You stole the fruit from off my tree—you stole my
contribution,
Your guilt is hidden 'neath your mask in surest
retribution.

You crept upon me from behind—your mind was
bent on thieving—
But bland of smile and countenance disguised by
wiles deceiving;
For many years you encouraged me, I toiled in
poverty,
My hair turned white, my shoulders stooped, then
success rewarded me.

Then came to me new confidence—the dullness of
my eye,
Was brightened, then with efforts crowned I
thanked you God on high;
There in my shop I humbly knelt in thankfulness
of prayer,
For I had wrought a great success, from years of
gaunt despair.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

How brightly now the old sun shone—I loved all
things that aided—
My bench and lathe and all my tools—they now to
me were sacred;
All my books and literature—digested page by
page—

For in thousands of an inch I read as with mili-
meter gauge.

Tedious and painstaking—my machine must be
just so—

Tho I often became discouraged and was tempted
to let go,

Conception and deep knowledge told and hot im-
agination

Would sweep me back to work again, to thought-
ful meditation.

I came to know the truth in me—I came to know
the need—

Of laborious application, if hoping to succeed;

More human like I then became and seemed in-
oculated,

With a great desire for things deprived so long I
all but hated.

So proud of my accomplishment that pride ran rife
in me—

Those things of life so long denied, I saw in reality;
And I pictured out the contrast—of what my life
had been,

Upon the past for twenty years, I gazed time and
again.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Now I nursed my failing body, for with honor,
fame and wealth,
Time would come for rest and sleep that would
bring me back to health;
My invention led—no other made machines that
could compete,
So simple in accomplishment and perfect and complete,
It did its work and accurate and lightened labor's
way,
And changed to ease and pleasure hard toil and
drudgery.

There is no fortune half so pure, nor sweeter compensation,
Than the reaping of the harvest from profound meditation;
There is no one who more deserves—nor dream
which should come true,
Than ones that are wrought from years of thought
—who in vision's forests hew,
Who shape and mould—who build and tear—re-
build and then destroy,
Whom disappointment oft rebukes and failure's
fears annoy;
There is no one whom God should help to brighter
make the road—
There is no one in any field who totes his heavy
load,
Than he who tries by brain and brawn—who at-
tempts creation's plan,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

There is no one who less receives from contemporary man.

Now that success had come to me there appeared a
radiancy splendid—
A craving for things I never thought were for such
as me intended;
I remembered now my mother's face and with
shame shed burning tears,
I had not had such tender thoughts as these for
many years;
So I gazed on life as never before, after sadness
and dejection,
And backward looked in happy frame in cheerful
retrospection.

I remembered well and do so still when my mind
turned to invention—
My father's frown I see it now, with usual apprehension—
He knew no one who ever made success at such a
trade,
And he told of worry and despair over which my
path was laid.
Mathematics and mechanics in my mind already
ran—
I see my start and finish now as oneself, he only can.

Then came the day of ecstasy in the early hours
of morn—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

No longer would I the subject be of the loafers'
unthoughtful scorn;
No more the stock for laughing or silly interroga-
tion,
That so often filled me with disgust to my utter
exasperation.
Better knows no one than I how idle doubt can
pain,
Its thrust of burning, sharpened prong made my
weary soul complain.

There was but one whom I did trust—one man my
secret knew;
He was the man who held my fate—he saw me
passing through,
And he became my confidant—what I knew to him
I told,
He said that I'd be wealthy—it was worth a mine
of gold.

He was a man who had the means—I agreed to
give a third,
So into partnership we went indeed as well as word;
And he, he was to finance me and till I got it
going,
He was to pay for patents and what little there
was owing;
To handle all the business end—I never had a
thought,
But what he would be fair and square in all the
things he ought.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

When you can talk to no one—not a soul who can
advise—
When yourself the problems must work out and
alone the means devise;
When solved the answers you cannot prove and in
doubtful steps have trod,
It is then you wish for counsel and there is no
one but God.

When you work along uncertain lines—for months
and years have spent,
Your failing and tiring energy for doubt and dis-
content,
When you know that manhood's prime has passed
and you note your failing sight,
It is then your very soul cries out in anguish at
your plight.

Imagine then what blessings crowded through my
tired frame;
Transport yourself there in my place, in body, soul
and name.
Allow yourself to think as I—with thoughts deep
and intense,
Upon a thing that held enslaved, my spirit and my
sense.

Enough had I of worries—of trouble and of woe,
Had I not gone the journey as far as I could go?
So censure not for confidence that proved so illy
placed—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

'Tis he not I that God on high, for a man by choice
debased,
Will turn unhearing ear away—for with sin so
vile as this,
Can never enter heaven's door, but fiery Hell's
abyss;
For if there's Hell designed for man by a pardonable
God,
It is for he whose footsteps over earth for years
have trod—
With time for full reflection and with means to
wrongs aright,
Who sees his victims suffering and is conscious of
their plight.

Forgive? And would you have me be just what I
was before,
Imagination's creative touch had opened wide the
door—
And showed to me the possible, along whose paths
I groped,
Until at last accomplishing all that I dreamed or
hoped?

But where—O where the stolen draught, when
lifted to my lip—
The nectar that the glass contained—that I about
to sip—
To taste the fruit from off my tree—the tree I
caused to grow,
Where is my compensation? Thank God, I can
show.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

See yon factory buildings rise—and see that tallest
stack,
Belching forth great volumes of smoke so coally
black?
See those buildings on beyond and those high cranes
and towers,
Do you see that white-faced brick that stands among
the trees and flowers?
Now see that fence enclosing all—that's painted
white and green—
That's where they manufacture my wonderful
machine.

Without my wonderful machine, there'd be no fac-
tory there—
When I think I made that possible, I suppose I
shouldn't care;
And when I see the happy folks who make the tiny
parts,
If I ever draw a happy breath, 'tis because those
happy hearts,
And homes and stores and families, are there be-
cause of me;
Wasted then is all my life, when all these things
I see?

Thousands work there in those shops and all these
learn a trade,
To do a part of a machine—the whole of which I
made;
Though terrible the sacrifice—if it my life has cost,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Can I well say my life's misspent and all my efforts lost?

Yes I am poor in money—and no one will believe,
When I try to tell my story, for no one can conceive

My doing what I say I've done, that, that machine
completed,
Then after I had done all that be so robbed and
cheated.

I told but one as I have said—one man my secret
knew—

He was the man who held my fate—he saw me
passing through,

But to see the product of that plant shipped to
every state,

From New York harbor in the East, West to the
Golden Gate—

To see it shipped to every clime—to lands far o'er
the sea,

That is the compensation that daily comes to me.

But hark! You hear those whistles shriek? The
workers' day is run—

For all the workers in that plant, another day is
done;

Though it brings a sting of sadness and melancholy steals,

Closely over its track there comes and to my eye
reveals

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Again my compensation to alleviate my hate,
For trooping homeward hurrying, are thousands
through that gate.

Should not all this my injured pride sufficiently
repay,
Should not I again in solitude kneel, and humbly
pray—

And ask my ever present God for forgiveness and
atone?

'Twas for millions that I sacrificed, though I toiled
for self alone.

I SORT O' THINGS REVIEWED

As I sat alone one ev'nin' in a contemplative mood—
After lapsin' retrospective—I sort o' things re-
viewed;

Now there's nothin' more elatin' or more balmin'
to my mind

Than at times to get reflectin' on the years that's
left behind.

There's a mighty little glory—when one sort o'
thinks a bit—

And you sort o' sort the genuine from the plated
counterfeit—

When one fairly takes an invoice then scans with
honest eyes,

The most of us are bankrupt—what ever that im-
plies.

As I said, there's little glory—if a fellow's on the
square—

When you remove the camouflage much worth is
seldom there;

I'm not speakin' for the benefit of the 'spicioned—
crooked—few,

But I'm speakin' broad and general like—I may be
hittin' you.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

We do forget—how fortunate—that power of the
brain—
Has saved us many a sleepless night and a dog-
gone lot o' pain,
And if "By-Heck" there was no check—to sort o'
drive away—
There'd be a lot less o' these rich folks a-motorin'
'round today.

Man is possessed o' faculties that he, himself, may
mold;
But now-a-days they are mostly used as a means
for makin' gold.
Our groc'ry men—our butcher men—'tis said and
it appears—
Have cornered all the eatin's and done turned profi-
teers.

Now when I get to thinkin'—as I do sometimes
alone—
It is then I get to gazin' on conditions I have
known;
Sometimes there comes a feelin' bringin' moisture
to my eyes,
Then again I'll get to talkin'—to myself solilo-
quize.

That night I got to thinkin'—"What we used to
have to eat"—
And I saw my mother's table—and "By-Heck" it
was a treat;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Must been a-havin' comp'ny—it was so big that
night—
Stretched out just likefer threshers with the table
cloth so white.

My imagination must o' been a-workin' good that
day—
Could hear Ma in the kitchen—she just talked and
talked away—
And I just kept a-hangin' 'round—out o' sight the
best I could—
I reckon I was scared to death she'd tell me, "Get
some wood."

Then—I saw them set the victuals on—a few things
I will tell—
Had roast turkey and fried chicken—there was
pumpkin-pie and jell;
There was dressin'—peas and noodles—and a nice
big leg o' lamb—
Apple-dumplin's—cream and butter—and a great
big plate o' ham.

They had cakes of ev'ry differ'nt kind—a-layered
way up high—
Spiced peaches—beets and pickles—and bread both
wheat and rye;
They had mashed and sweet potatoes—these sug-
ared-up more sweet—
And with coffee mother roasted—was quite some
meal to eat.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Oh, yes, one thing I most forgot—big roastin'
ears—they had;
My mouth just got to waterin' so—I got to slobber'n bad.
They had just rafts of other stuff—a lot I didn't see—
I've merely told some o' the things that always
'pealed to me.

But at last I tired o' even that—a-settin' there
alone—
And I felt so gol-danged hungry—like a dog—could
eat a bone;
So with all the things a-ringin' and 'a-slippin'
through my mind,
I went out to the pantry—to see what I could
find.

I looked all through the cup-board—I looked into
the chest—
And down there in a corner—in a cozy little nest—
Reposin'—just so comfy—in a tissue-paper bed—
Was a stingy—dingy—heel of—what was once a
loaf o' bread.

So I got in bed that ev'nin' in a contemplative
mood—
After lapsin' retrospective—I sort o' things re-
viewed.

O DAMN THOSE WICKED, WAGGIN'
TONGUES

If you ever get to thinkin' on some subject good
and deep—
And it holds you soul and body, so's you get but
little sleep,
If you get at times so bloomin' mad that for days
you're good and blue—
And ev'ry thing you're tryin' fails—and you don't
know what to do,
You will have a good idea how I felt that gloomy
day,
When this whole town ('cludin' murderers)
helped to lay that girl away.

There ain't no use a-talkin' boys—I have thought
on this a lot—
And my feelin's ain't a patchin' to the ones that
I forgot—
There ain't no words that's bad enough—and I
surely know a few,
But I've searched my mind and fail to find the ones
I think will do;
So I merely keep repeatin'—sort o' pumpin' with
my lungs,
“O damn those scandalmongers and their wicked,
waggin' tongues.”

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Now Mary Johnson never died as they say—"by
her own hand,"
There never lived a better girl in this or any
land;
That she is dead is proof enough that she in life
was good—
She always lived the best she knew, and did the
best she could,
The first she knew of actual wrong—the first she
knew of sin—
She got from others worse than she, thru talk and
gossipin'.

At first she took it as a joke—so innocent was she—
She could not see or understand—it all was mys-
tery;
The story grew—the women wagged for all that
they were worth,
And found delight in misery—the worst there is
on earth.
She suffered humbly and alone the undeserved dis-
grace,
That mocked and talked and followed her—it was
with her ev'ry place.

When old friends and acquaintances, unnoticed
passed her by,
With knowin' smiles and gigglin'—she knew the
reason why;
And men or things—who think they're men—with
silly looks they stared,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

As at some ferocious animal, that helpless lies en-
snared.

Day after day, week after week had come and passed
away—

Her rosy cheeks had long since paled and no more
bright and gay,

Melancholy grasped her—her eyes were dark and
blank—

Deserted she was by all her friends, now from her
parents shrank;

Suspicious were the looks of all—tho guiltless of a
sin,

Her world was changed and different from the
world she'd traveled in.

Even the flowers meant naught to her—the singin'
of the birds—

Seemed accusin' and taunted knowin'ly, that meant
as much as words;

She knew no one to whom to turn—and little did
she care—

For her life was goin' inch by inch, no longer could
she bear.

When midnight came and the town-clock tolled,
poor Mary scrawled a note,

Nervously and hurriedly—and this is what she
wrote.

“What right have I to live on earth, when spurned
by all who from my birth,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Have known me well—as I have you—I see no
happiness in view;
It seems that you have chosen me to bear disgrace-
ful misery,
And heaped upon my girlhood brow, a sin unknown
to me till now;
Guiltless though of even a thought of doing a
thing—but what I ought—
To be accused of this terrible sin, you steal my life
where it should begin.
If thoughtlessly my fate decide, as you have sen-
tenced, I abide;
And take with me undeserved shame; please let me
rest, forget my name.”

We found her in the river, boys, and we laid her
'neath the sod,
In the lot she often visited—where her feet had
often trod;
Never will we hear her voice—no more her cheery
call—
That so often rang with friendliness for you and
I and all,
Who knew her since a little babe—and through her
youthful years—
Far was her fall from happiness to drownin' in her
tears.

When God makes out His scale of deeds—when sins
are sized and graded—
We will better know how far to go with things
insinuated;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

How quickly springs what seems the truth—like a
rolling ball of snow—

It gains momentum and in size and no one tries to
know—

To learn the facts or trace the source 'till reputa-
tion ravel—

Until it's lost forever in its speedin', w'd'nin'
travels.

We know that girl was murdered—if by another
name—

She has its harshness tempered, it is murder just
the same.

There is no sin that is so black as malicious im-
putation,

That helps to steal, to kill or mar some other's
reputation;

Of all the songs that have been writ, these words
should oft be sung—

“O Damn a Scandalmonger and a Wicked, Wag-
gin' Tongue!”

I'VE BEEN STINGY 'BOUT RELIGION

Written for the \$75,000,000 Baptist Campaign

I've been a member of the church nigh-on to forty
year—
And have always done my duty as it did to me ap-
pear;
I have tried to be a Christian like I wanted folks
to know,
That I followed in His footsteps—just where He'd
have me go.

But today I got to thinkin'—when discussin' That
Campaign—
Somethin' up an' hit me sudden like—I saw things
mighty plain;
For compared with other kinds of things—I felt
guilty when I thought—
What I'd laid out on religion was a lot less than
I ought.

I've been ev'ry thing but preacher—I'm a Baptist
thru and thru—
And without the church, Ah brethren I don't know
what I'd do;
I have gotten all the benefits—it is there I've sung
and prayed—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But considerin' all these blessin's what a little I
have paid!

I've been wrong—that's sure as shootin'—but I
saw my duty plain,
'Twas like bein' re-converted when I boosted That
Campaign;
I had the money in the bank—and there's thousands
more like me—
Who've been stingy 'bout religion—I reckon
thoughtlessly.

But I signed that paper, Brother, and I made them
figgers shine—
For somethin' sort o' told me all that money wasn't
mine;
I didn't want to have it said that all I did was
save,
So I fin'ly paid it in a lump—to the Lord, His
share I gave.

Let's do our duty, Baptists, and we'll make our
church worth while—
And give it a chance to do its work in regular
Christian style;
Let us set a higher standard by puttin' it on its
feet—
Let's go over the top a-singin' and make that job
complete.

We will put it where our children and our chil-
dren's children too,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Can have all such advantages that of course we
never knew;
Fix up all the missions—and the preachers, let
them preach,
Let 'em go 'long the highways and let 'em the
heathen teach.

Provide for all the veterans—give 'em rest in their
old age—
For they've spent their lives a-toilin' at 'bout half
a common wage;
Money can be no better spent than t'wards this
worthy goal,
“Man needs but little here below,” but to give does
help the soul.

It's a business proposition—if religion's a success—
Those who can must keep it goin'—those who can't
and in distress
Can reap then of the blessin's that the abler can
afford,
And great will be the dividends—but greater the
reward.

THE DEVIL ABDICATES

Mister Kaiser, said the Devil, at last I humbly
bow—
I have never bowed but to myself, but to you I'm
bending now;
I have held the crown through out all time and
have ruled the best I could—
And have never thought of rivals, nor dreamed I
ever would.

I have never bent a stiffened knee—nor have I ever
faltered—
No ways but mine could ever see and these have
never altered;
But went my way and carried out and had my will
obeyed,
And never have I followed or have I second played.

Always, Mister Kaiser, I have tried to live to
name—
And have always too, been willing to bear the brunt
of blame;
Even tho it's hard and difficult—the thing I'm going
to do,
My place and ancient title, I surrender all to
you.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

No one knows me Kaiser—even I have never
known
That I was tender hearted, but I perhaps alone,
Know I am a failure—and to fail when I had
thought,
I had done my duties nobly in every way I ought.

I thought too, Mister Kaiser, by use of fiery brand,
To rule my kind of people with a heavy iron hand;
Recruits and converts always came and great sacri-
fices bore,
And never 'gainst his wishes has a man passed thru
my door.

Though I have had no favorites, every one was
treated well—
And always have I given them the very best in
hell;
But it seems that all my efforts and the time that
I have spent,
At last are unavailing, for they are no more con-
tent.

I have noticed daily that my folks were no more
satisfied—
And have known that some new method soon
would have to be applied,
For murmurings of revolution and dissatisfaction
grew,
I have heard them talking openly and they always
talked of you.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

They talked of me behind my back and thought I
wouldn't hear—
And they held me not in horror, nor in ordinary
fear;
And said that near—so close to us—just a block
or two from hell,
In good old loyal Germany, that you were known to
dwell.

They have picked you Mister Kaiser, just because
I didn't dare,
To do the things that you have done—I did not
think it fair,
And it is true, I never did or never cared to do,
The things you'll have an answer for, things justly
charged to you.

It never mattered much to me—tho the Devil I
have been,
For I only took those people who volunteered for
sin;
I never killed or massacred a woman, child or man.
And it never entered into a single scheme or plan.

I do not mean to censure—but how I'd like to
know,
What kind of dust you're made of and why out of
hell it's so;
For man or beast—what e'er you are—how can
you be at ease,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

When you murder, 'rape or slaughter exactly as
you please.

How can heaven—and there is—I know there is a
God,
Look down and see the vineyards by the Kaiser be-
ing trod;
How can God—who knows you well—look down
and see you tread,
Wreaking brutal vengeance on even helpless dead.

How can He watch the workings of your blood
crazed war machine,
Grinding, reeking, dripping blood, such as the world
has never seen;
In Belgium, Poland, Servia and France and others
too—
I suspect some kind of reckoning, when they get
hold of you.

I have always been the Devil and my home was
always Hell,
But since you are superior, it is you who there
should dwell;
I do not doubt but what you will some awful
changes make—
I have no doubt but ruin will follow in your wake.

But there amongst the earth's elect—although I
cannot know,—
Just what reception you'll receive, on taking charge
below;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I relinquish to you Kaiser the workings and each
part,
For it's there that you can practice to your heart's
content your art.

The greatest reason Kaiser why I am giving way,
It's merely a side issue, but this I want to say;
All my lands and provinces, possessions great and
small,
I am giving to you cheerfully—I am giving to you
all.

I want you to go and promptly—leave the country
of your birth—
The above is my inducement to get you off the
earth;
You have won such laurels—such as they are—
again let Nature smile,
And I feel that Hell will hold you for no tem-
porary while.

Let weeping mothers, the bleeding earth and civil-
ization try—
To repair its broken, damaged face while centuries
passeth by;
For years most without number will come and go
again,
Ere beautiful lands and kingdoms and hills and
fertile plain,

Be what they were before you came with worse than
hell's devices,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

So treacherous and savage your cruelties and vices;
So from this date, 'tis you who'll wield the scepter
and the laws—
And you will all the honors reap and applause—
and you like applause.

'Tis you who will, when Gabriel blows, his long,
long parting blast—
Still be in arms in infamy—which so long has held
you fast;
Then by his strength ignoble—so merciful will
he,
Whisper through his sulphur breath, your kind of
sympathy.

Then ere your nostrils have been closed—long be-
fore your breath
Has ceased to be, you will have known the reward
that comes with death;
For death like to others will not come—I know
that this is true,
For it will frolic and will play and have lots of
fun with you.

So go now, Kaiser Wilhelm, your duty lies be-
fore—
For talent howe'er ignoble there is much—so much
in store;
Go and tell my door-man that the Kaiser wishes in,
They are waiting for you Kaiser, to rule the land
of sin.

THE SERENADERS

Sing on light hearted singers, sing;
Your melodious noise is cheer.
On such a night as this you bring
Our hearts and spirits near.

'Twas welcome music when we heard
Your faint twang, twang afar—
And like some early morning bird
Are you and your guitar.

Now let us hear your mandolin,
And let your voices rise;
Sing on my neighbors, sing like sin,
Let's together neutralize—

All hate and thoughts and deeds unkind,
Let's sing our cares away;
And leave all selfishness behind,
Forget them for the day.

Sing some familiar melodies
That every one should know—
'Twill bring to all sweet memories
Of perhaps the long ago.

We'll all again once more be young—
For it makes the aged blest—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

When he has' with proper spirit sung,
And joined in with the rest.

Come often friends and serenade—
You are welcome when you care,
For upon God's instruments you played
Some sweet familiar air.

We'll sing those songs when we're alone,
As through our lives we go;
The songs that we have always known,
For God would have it so.

THIS IS MY PRAYER TO THEE

To be a man—God give me strength
To follow my convictions—any place to any
length;
Give me that proud conception that I may plainly
see,
Right and truth with that great power to give the
best in me.

Give me, Lord, that courage—both to body and to
mind,
That I may bravely onward forge and never look
behind;
That I may face accusers with a positive man like
view—
And to my own convictions, O help me, Lord, be
true.

Help me to evade the hand that would make of me
a slave
To unprincipled cliques and elements—who would
make of me a knave;
O give me independence and initiative power,
That my own master I may be every conscious day
and hour.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Help me to distinguish when appearances deceive—
And to see the real significance, what perhaps is
make-believe;
Help me, Lord, to scorn the thought of hypocrite or
liar—
And to preserve my self-respect and attain ideals
higher.

Help me sweep aside indifference—my trembling
voice to rise,
To speak my own opinions when I know them to
be wise;
Shield me, Lord, from all of those who sacrifice the
truth,
And early teach these principles to inexperienced
youth.

Help me to be that kind of man that never can be
bought—
And let me be in practice the kind of man I ought;
Help me to be, O Lord,—A Man—just what you'd
have me be—
This is my prayer, O Lord of Hosts—this is my
prayer to Thee.

A CAPTAIN'S THOUGHTS

Written at Camp Sherman, O., Winter of 1918

When softened contemplation brings to solemn
minds a view,
Of our duty to the soldiers and the things we ought
to do;
When we invoice past accomplishments and gaze
with discontent,
On the details of each day's routine and each little
element.

When you're one of many thousands that for cause
have gathered here,
From all sections of the country, leaving kin and
homes so dear.
When you see the masses as a whole—whose heart
beats, beat as one,
From the blowing of old Reveille, till the sound
of Taps is done.

In their messes and their barracks, in their practice
march and drills—
In their routine duties as they come, and which each
soldier fills,
There's a feeling kin to sadness, there's a feel of
tenderness,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Though the thought in a real man's thought, its
Truth is none the less.

I have often gazed into the face—some boy the
draft has caught,
And have tried to glean from shadows—I have
studied and have sought,
To learn the pictured vision, that alone he knowing
sees,
Till I've learned to read the very thoughts and per-
sonalities.

I have seen young boys who not till now had left
parental hearth,
When on duty do the work required and in this have
shown their worth;
But when left alone in idleness, their minds begin
to roam,
And all they see are visions of mother, friends and
home.

No doubt he sees the curling of the smoke from
chimney stack—
No doubt he sees his mother by his mansion, hut or
shack;
And he sees far more than e'er portrayed on can-
vas, card or wall,
And sometimes his heart is breaking as he gazes
over all.

As Jack Frost can paint a picture on a glass with-
out a brush,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

So can the soldier first from home, when home
thoughts o'er him rush;
There is no world—there is no place that is to him
so fine,
And I know of what I'm speaking, for such pictures
oft were mine.

Back home some place he sees a girl, and through
the glis'ning tears,
He sees a something that he dreads, the nightmare
of his fears;
The little girl that still is his—then doubts and
questions rise,
As he sees the lad who was not called through dark
and jealous eyes.

But now, though feeling lonely, sad, he mutters
words that he,
Would not have had his mother hear—close to pro-
fanity;
But had he not now grown a man—was he not now
of age?
And who can blame this conscript for his show of
healthy rage.

Had he not gone away from home to for his
country fight—
And can we blame him when he thinks he's not
been treated right?
He cannot help but feel that he, who was among the
picked,
Is being undermined at home; by others being
tricked.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

So rage within him daily grows—he knows that
he's in War,
He also knows the reasons and what he's in it for;
So he swears he'll go to France to fight—the folks
at home will see,
That he's a man, if he has to lick the whole of
Germany.

So that's the spirit, and it's taught—we are teach-
ing them to fight,
When our boys get over there, they are going at it
right.
So girls at home, remember, and please do not for-
get—
Your sweetheart's on a mission, but he's thinking of
you yet.

Take no advantage now that he, his rights cannot
defend—
But be the one he thought you were, on you let him
depend;
Let you be inspiration to carry out his deeds—
For perhaps upon the battle field, he suffers and
he bleeds.

Help him by telling him that you will stick through
thick and thin—
And know ye that deceitfulness is a rotten kind of
sin;
Make him believe—yes, make him know that you'll
wait and do the right,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

So that he may, with honor, like hell go in and
fight.

You stay-at-homes, take warning—it's a dastard
thing to do—

While all is fair in love and war, this does not
allude to you.

If you had the proper kind of blood, or the right
percent of man,

You would have on the uniform helping carry out
the plan.

But those who can and do not do, in every act re-
flect,

The exactness of their measurements and sacrifice
respect.

When Hist'ry shall have writ the words, how proud
our boys will be,

That they have helped to save the world and made
safe democracy.

How proud will be their children, as they tell with
honest pride,

How their father or his father, fought and lived or
maybe died;

That he had done his little bit—that he bravely
gave his all;

So do honor to the soldiers that have answered to
the call.

DISCIPLINE

O Discipline, my jailer and my friend!
You came as an arch enemy, disguised;
And, being strange, I failed to comprehend,
Yet learned to admire one heartily despired.

You forced yourself upon me when you came—
I'd never known or wished an introduction;
But knew by reputation and by name,
Then came to you by forced induction.

The firmness of your voice held me in awe—
No less your cold and calculating eye;
I did not relish what I heard or saw,
And vowed your wishes to defy.

I did, however, bend reluctant knee
That never had but when my own mind willed,
Much less a proud rebellious spirit, me
But which was by your expert tactics killed.

I watched and thought and studied day by day,
To find some undiscovered weakness there;
To learn your heart and then that heart to slay,
And cared not by what means, nor foul nor fair.

As days went on I learned some things thought
bad—
I saw some good develop from your style—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And soon I saw amongst the traits you had,
Some semblance of a kindly face—a smile.

A smile at times, though hidden, seemed to lurk,
And, too, whenever I attempted you to please,
And do as you required and ceased to shirk,
My duties changed from drudgery to ease.

And with what ease I accomplished all required,
Those self same tasks that yesterday were mean—
And both myself and you got all desired,
And things now clear were all the clearer seen.

Even then I did not in all agree,
Nor did I wish to knuckle and to bow,
And in my heart determined not to be,
Your disciple and your slave as I am now.

I do not mean to say I am your slave,
For next to crime is it for one to dare;
But to obey and honor one who gave
So much, is simply justice, broad and fair.

So easy—and how careless are our acts—
How lightly do we plod and sow the seeds—
And lie and plant those lies as fertile facts,
And reap a harvest grown to weeds.

How often do we fail to cultivate,
As civilians how we fail to comprehend
Or understand ourselves, nor elevate

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

The things and thoughts we know have right to
blend.

How often in our lives does misery
Come marching down upon us as it wills,
Unworried and unprepared, yet do not flee
But watch it come across the nearby hills.

We lack a master with an iron hand,
A master that can teach a soldier's pride—
Until, we never will, but will misunderstand,
Until both we have a leader and a guide.

O Discipline you have taught me much—
To repay, I this at least do not expect
But I agree to follow at your touch
And by so doing your wish reflect.

I want to make my light and yours to shine—
I want to make the flame go flaming higher,
To show the world your light is also mine,
And mine is always waiting your desire.

I am converted and convinced and hope
That what you do may your great wisdom show—
And that your field will reach far greater scope,
For waiting are great multitudes to know.

Few people know exactly what you are,
Few people have, of course, given you a thought;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But you have come and millions near and far,
Have learned no lesson greater than you taught.

You cannot teach a man to be your slave,
Nor can you wish and have that wish come
true—

But you can teach a man to be a knave,
And with a wish, can have so much to do.

If you can teach a man to be a knave,
You will also teach a knave to be a man;
He can't be both, not even his life to save,
Nor ever could since this old world began.

The lesson taught has opened up a scope,
That will ere long cry out for such a need;
To remake the world will be our greatest hope,
And you will make it possible—indeed!

Long years will slip into the past—
For men will stand faint hearted at the plow,
And with their spirits broken stand aghast,
And wait for you, are waiting even now.

Wild beasts of the jungle learn to yield,
The low brained animals to mind,
And all the creatures of the wood and field
Are taught by you at once so harsh and kind.

They seem to know no thought but to obey—
They see your eye and remember what they see;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And then they seem so happy in their play,
Though confined are more contented than if free.

Freedom is a figurative speech—
No one seems to know the limits round—
But often unowned territory reach,
And there too often run aground.

People work in slipshod fashion as they will,
But seldom by intensive effort plan,
Their acres and then those acres till,
'Tis the path of ease, the average way of man.

It is not the way of nature, nor of God—
It is not the way main precedents were laid,
Nor is it just that man should merely plod,
Nor yet the way that worthy things are made.

Man scratches at the very top of earth—
Uncares what lies beneath the soil,
Yet slides and glides along from birth,
But few bear fruit, the fruit of toil.

No system nor a well made chart
Has he to follow or to guide;
No end has he not e'en a place to start,
Nor does he know the measure of his stride.

ABOUT FACE

One night a man—a failure—walked slowly bowed
in shame,
Toward his home and family with heart and mind
afame;
There shone a light in his dark eyes, that never yet
had shone—
Nor in all his thirty and odd years had he felt so
much alone.

No different was he this day, than was he year after
year—
No more had he the need of funds, no more had
he to fear—
But something came to him with force—and vivid
was the view—
It seemed that all his life lay bare from the time
his years were few.

He saw his start on failure's path—he saw his
winding way—
He looked far back into his youth—it seemed but
yesterday;
So short a time and middle life was here and wind-
ing on,
With contemplation he reviewed the years that
long had gone.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Years of experience' had taught—though thought-
less well he knew—
Great opportunities he missed as he had traveled
through,
This life though, he well realized, was rough when
at its best,
But the smooth and easy one he chose, ignoring
all the rest.

There was no one whom he could blame—he had no
good excuse—
He had no reason or alibi, to complain there was no
use;
The present he knew to be the seed to plant in
future's field,
On this depended well he knew, the grade and
kind of yield.

Not those of fancy were his thoughts, nor visions'
flashy flight,
Nor were they the kind that come in dreams—in
restless sleep of night—
But were a backward glance on life—the route o'er
which he came—
And shamed he stumbled to his door—to those who
bore his name.

His wife well knew his sorry plight, how aimless
was his way—
Though capable and of good intent, she never had
a say—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Or, never felt that to suggest would brighten up
his path—

He seemed self-centred without cause and often
turned to wrath.

So right or wrong she humored him and good and
kind and true,

She smothered her words before their birth—as
thousands like her do,

And allowed him go—and rudderless upon life's
stormy sea,

So without compass or means to steer, his port was
misery.

With resolution on his face, concentration in his
eye,

With features spread—with the look of a hound
determined to win or die—

With shoulders back and chin in the air—though
withal a kind of grace—

He said to his wife "here's where we turn" I am
going to find my place."

Years have passed since we saw him last; let us
see now what we see.

The sight we behold is as good as gold—it is good
for you and me—

As the general said to his boys one day "Turn boys
we are going back,"

Back he went in word and deed, and he won in
each attack.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He tackled his habits that bore him down—he won
each skirmish there—
When they returned they could do no harm—he did
not even prepare—
He changed his route to face about, and deserted
the easy road;
And as he goes he reaps and he sows and he carries
a lighter load.

He found his place as will every one—of this there
is no doubt—
When ever a man is determined to win and he
knows what he is about.
There is in store—and a little more—than what he
most desires,
When backed by vim that's aroused in him, and
ambition that feeds the fires.

He changed his life and that of his wife, from
worry and bitter despair,
Contentment abounds and success surrounds tak-
ing the place of care.
So take as a lesson the change in the man who
floundered till forced by his shame,
Then driven he turned his back on the past, and
found his place and a name.

THE SLAYING OF—THE THING

'Twas a middle western city—in a state of famous
name—

Noted for wide-awakeness and commercially the
same;

Its progressiveness was unexcelled—for decades its
name had shone—

Reflecting reputation where the city's name was
known.

The products of its factories reached the lands of
every tongue—

And deserving were the praises that were for the
city sung.

Always patriotic—in the war had done its share—

And made great sacrifices—just as much as it
could bear.

Character was written—or civic pride had
wrought—

What certain cities never learn—what the cen-
turies have taught.

Always had its citizens repelled unjust report,

And stood behind their merchants with dependable
support.

With liberal minds assistance gave to minimize dis-
tress—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And earned the name as well as fame for their
unselfishness;
They backed their enterprises and to principles
were true—
And dishonest aspirations were consequently few.

No grafting politician here to raise his head would
dare—
Nor the municipality could he tempt much less
ensnare!
But now alas! to it had come a dreaded plague or
pest—
And good cause had its citizens to be terribly de-
pressed.

For step by step—then leaps and bounds—an un-
welcome stranger came—
And now there lived 'mongst decent folks, A Thing
—the city's shame—
It had no heart—it had no friends—it grabbed—it
grasped—it grew—
It had no shame nor sympathy—this thing no pity
knew!

No one ever knew before such a monster—or so
vile—
It cared not for opinions—it would only sneer and
smile—
It seemed devoid of any sense that better instincts
teach—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And lied and tried by every art the poor man's
purse to reach!

It worked not only on the rich—the widow's mite
it stole—
And damned beyond redemption—but no—it had
no soul!
No such a thing had ever come—no such vile thing
as this—
Had reappeared—if this it did—from fiery hell's
abyss.

And yet this thing—this awful thing—'mongst de-
cent people mixed!
And it appeared—what most had feared—to be
permanently fixed;
It brought to the community unrest unknown be-
fore—
And slept upon the very stoop of the honest—wor-
thy poor.

Up—up—and up the prices went—when by all the
laws we know—
Down—down—the prices should have gone—and
statistics teach us so;
Influence then was brought to bear—the influential
tried—
But it accused some other and of course some body
lied.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

It became a wonder prophet—its iniquities to
brace—
And employed intimidation—its merchandise to
place—
Then Ah! Too true the prices soared—on every
thing we eat—
The coat we wear upon our backs—the shoes upon
our feet.

No limit nor no sense it knew—things grew more
and more dear—
Most all grew poor—the poor more poor—but not
the profiteer!
Conditions were unbearable—no wages could
suffice—
For with every little increase up shot the robber's
price.

And things so insignificant—outrageous prices
brought.
A dollar had no dignity—and Oh so little bought!
A cent up to a quarter—no purchase power knew—
Then—patience was exhausted—people knew not
what to do.

One night the city council—with the mayor in his
chair—
Met to discuss this dragon—and if necessary—
prayer—
Conditions were disgraceful and deplorably so bad

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

The city's ship was floundering—some solution must be had.

'Twas after much discussion that its youngest member rose—

And with much enthusiasm he talked as one who knows;

"I've arrived at the conclusion that a scheme I've got in mind,

Will prove the greatest remedy that is possible to find!"

"With your help and your approval—the only help I need—

I'll put in execution a plan that might succeed."

He explained his proposition—just what they'd have to do—

That would kill off profiteering—then he went and put it through.

He organized and systemitized—a working force he made—

(And dallied not with details nor with little things delayed)

He called to him the ministers—the lawyers and physicians—

And made them head committees—and important like positions.

He called the heads of labor trades—their elements to lead—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

The officials of the county—the township—and indeed
The deacons of the churches—this was delicate to do—
And made them charter members—he made them leaders too.

He got in touch with editors—their scribes and press reporters—
He headed this committee and called it “The Exhorters!”
He recognized and understood the value of the press—
And it proved the greatest factor in a wonderful success.

In secret and seclusion their preparations made—
With a certain time agreed upon—it would not be delayed—
Night after night—and all night long—their propagandic brains—
Worked on to see what could result to pay them for their pains.

And then—one sunny afternoon two aeroplanes appeared,
High up in the aerie dome—and circling as they neared—
With propellers whirring noisily above the city swept—
And high above—next to the clouds—but above the city kept.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And then the air was filled with bills—a propa-
ganda shower—

“The Profiteer Bombarded” for an even half an
hour;

And scathing—so like bullets—so damaging and
true—

The truth had come from out the sky—at last the
people knew!

The morrow came and wondering—the people
searched the sky—

And sure enough—the planes appeared from out the
clouds on high;

Again in mighty circles—they seemed each house to
scan—

Then—shower after shower of convincing truths to
man.

Many—many—thousands fell—it was like a fall of
snow—

And then they read and they believed—they knew
that it was so;

Then conversation started—the scheme was worth
the try,

Though they wondered how it started—they did
not wonder why.

Then mutual understanding came and common com-
munion held—

Caste and class were cast aside and prejudice dis-
pelled;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

The war had taught great lessons—in reality prepared—
For just such an emergency—this was often heard declared.

And soldiers, too, who had returned from the great
and bloody war—
Displayed no hesitation—this they were ready for;
They felt the great injustice—which seemed as
much unfair
As the “Unrestricted Warfare” that took them
“Over There.”

Day after day the planes appeared—their pamphlets
to bestow—
Which dropped with regularity to the populace below;
Then people ceased to wonder—but with thinking
minds became
To understand their share of fault in what they
were to blame.

They had they knew encouraged it—by being simply meek—
By turning when one side was smote to him the
other cheek;
They had like some poor pacifist—no resisting power
to kill—
But bowed to this imposter and to his imposturous
will.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Now like some great religious wave—great repara-
tive power—
Took hold of the inhabitants, growing stronger hour
by hour ;
No longer were they impotent—but determined now
had grown,
To no more cheer the profiteer—but to let him work
alone.

Surprising, too, how people took their interests to
heart—
As if some solemn duty urged them to do their part ;
They deprived themselves of every thing but just
enough to eat—
And cut to war time rations their groceries and
meat.

They cut out every needless thing—old things in-
stead of new—
Became the city's fashion—folks simply made them
do ;
Like gasolineless Sundays—for a principle alike—
And to their cause were loyal—their high cost of
living strike.

Without a sign of violence—they respected all
the laws—
But followed all instructions that were framed to
help their cause ;
Then here—then there—then great surprise—from
every side appears

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Reduction sales and cut price sales of self-branded profiteers.

The weeks had come—the weeks had gone—my
story has been said;
But at their feet the profiteer lay mangled—cold
and dead.
That Thing—that Thing—that awful thing that
for dishonest gain
Had robbed its benefactors—they in self-defense had
slain.

WE WERE FIVE, MOTHER AND DAD
AND US THREE BOYS

There were three of us boys—there was Mother
and Dad, sitting at supper one night,
And we talked of the war and Jim—just a lad—
was crazy to get in the fight.
Little Jim—with fuzz on his face—and Fred, he
cared nothing for war—
But I was determined tho I'd recently learned, what
all of the fighting was for.
There were three of us boys, there was Mother and
Dad, eating and talking of war.

One by one the three of us boys (when Fred's num-
ber was called he went)
We entered the service for Uncle Sam—and in time
each one was sent,
One by the way of England, two straight for
France's shore.
Now Mother and Dad had given their all, to fight
in the terrible war.

Months went by—then Mother wrote; I could see
her tear drops fall—
Poor Dad was killed in an accident. Now Mother
had given all.
Still there was Fred—a worthy lad—there was lit-
tle Jim and me—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But small consolation I had to own, we in war, far
'cross the sea.

More time went by—those busy days employed my
mind and kept

Me thinking about those shells that burst, or over
me whistling swept;

Then a message said that Fred was killed—I got
the word one night—

And my very soul with sadness filled, Fred—who
didn't want to fight.

That left Mother and little Jim—Mother and Jim
and I.

And I vowed right there I'd have revenge, or know
the reason why.

Then came the great immortal drive—we had put
them on the run—

The drive that kept them going till our job, this
time was done;

We had reached a little village—we had scarcely
reached the place

When something hit me viciously, slam right side
the face.

Well they quickly took me some place, to patch
me up a bit—

But I guess you can tell by lookin' how mean them
Germans hit.

But I got on and got on fine—but 'round me there
was lyin'

The finest boys that ever lived—still fightin' and
a-dyin'.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

When I could move I always did—so casual like I
walked,
Among the boys and kidded them, and cheered
them as I talked.
As I moved 'round I saw a face—but no, could not
be him—
Then Christ forgive me for it was—my little
brother Jim.

Well I moved back—little Jim had died—and
right there Jimmy stayed;
And beside a host of other boys, little Jim is laid.
There was Mother and Dad and us three boys, but
three of us had to die—
So Mother and I were now alone—still left was
she and I.

The armistice came—and then we talked— and we
always talked of home—
And we sang those songs of hearth-sides and no
more will we roam.
Finally I reached New York—and I felt that I
was blest;
Just as soon as I got my furlough I started for the
West.
O how I loved my Mother now—much more than
I had before—
But I dreaded—how I dreaded to meet her at the
door.

At last I reached that Western town—and straight-
way from the train—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

I went down Broadway—Jefferson—then home on
good old Main.

Then I saw the house where I was born—seemed
strange—'Twas lighted bright—

Something wrong I thought, but hurried on—'twas
dark and cold that night;

Then I stood frozen in my tracks—children laughed
and sang—

A Victrola played and merriment of a happy family
rang.

But I pulled myself together and I rang that old
doorbell—

I'd inquire for my mother and of course some one
could tell;

A lady came—I a soldier stood—(in khaki I was
clad)

I told my name—she asked me in, but looked sur-
prised and sad.

You do not know? She asked of me—I am sorry
boy, for you;

Your mother's dead, my boy, she said—she died of
Spanish Flu.

There were three of us boys—there was Mother
and Dad; all of 'em dead but me;

Me alone and O what a heavy heart—and O what
a cheerless sea.

My father was killed in an accident—my brothers
the Germans slew—

My mother died of that terrible thing, commonly
known as Flu.

OLD SURLY—MY DOG

Old Surly was no common dog;
I remember him so well.
Do you want to hear his story, son?
Then listen while I tell.
When I was just a little boy—
Just 'bout the size of you—
I had a dog—a great big dog—
And a mighty fine one too.

Come lad, let's sit upon this rug
That before the grate is spread—
Look here son, see this silken hair,
And this tail and feet and head
This rug was once my own good dog—
This skin with hair so curly,
Was once a great, big, loving dog;
His name? His name was Surly.

He was not cross, as one might think—
Or as his name implied—
Least no one ever proved he was,
Though sometimes people tried;
See these big feet, and these big toes—
They often knocked me down—
For he always played so silly like—
Just like a Circus Clown.

'Round and 'round me he would run—
As happy as could be—
And then sometimes he'd get too close,
And bump right into me;
Then down I'd go—then sorry like
He'd lick my hands and face,
And if I was ever missing
He'd hunt just every place.

And when at last he would find me—
With delight he'd bark and grin—
And look at me as if to say,
Where the dickens have you been?
And if folks some times came near me—
Unless he knew them well—
He'd bristle up and growl a bit—
And if I'd cry or yell—

Wherever that old dog would be,
He'd come bound after bound—
Then stand by me just like a guard,
A-lookin' all around.
I loved that good old dog, my boy—
Just as much as dogs can be—
And son, it nearly broke my heart,
When they took my dog from me.

One night Old Surly broke his chain—
He was gone away all night—
And when next morning he came home,
Old Surly was a sight;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

He was simply covered o'er with mud
And cockle-burrs and such,
With a piece of chain a-jinglin'—
He wasn't fit to touch.

And then a man—a great big man—
Came a-knockin' at the door,
He was a countryman, my boy,
That I'd never seen before.
He inquired for my father—
Said something 'bout the law,
A madder man I'd never seen,
Than that farmer man at Pa.

Well they went and got Old Surly—
He was sorry and distressed—
Then he begged them both for mercy,
And in his way confessed;
The farmer then took hold of him—
Then looked at Surly's jaw—
Then had my dad look for himself;
What d'you 'spose he saw?

'Twas wool, my boy; the farmer said
My dog had killed his sheep;
And after that for many days,
I could hardly eat or sleep.
For on that day they took my dog,
And shot him in the head—
And when I got to see him,
My good old dog was dead.

Right there I'd lost the greatest friend,
I ever was to know—
For besides you, and a very few,
It has really proven so.
For never have I since that time,
Ever known such jealous care—
For where's a friend that's like a dog,
Wants with you every where.

Old Surly wasn't guilty son,
But he was led a-stray—
And un-so-phis-ti-ca-ted,
He was easily led away;
He got out with fast and reckless dogs—
Thought he was having fun—
Then on circumstantial evidence,
They killed him with a gun.

But my father kept his hide my boy,
And Surly still is here;
And as long as he is watching,
You do not need to fear.
For Surly, son, he never sleeps—
When asleep or when you play—
His eyes are always open—
He is watching night and day.

THE PICTURE

There's a common little picture that adorns the
 "Poets' Page"—
Bringing memories in mixture with a force I can-
 not gauge;
It is just a little picture—so reduced and dwarfed
 in size—
That to see it as I see it, calls for retrospective
 eyes.
It has no frame to set it off, but on merit stands
 alone—
The work of some great artist on whom fortune
 never shone;
That theory I won't accept, 'tis some famous mind
 in art,
Who long ago was recognized with wealth to purse
 and heart.

It is the scene of harvest—nigh to huskin' time in
 fall—
And the spirit of America seems to hover over all.
I see a field of new-cut corn in wigwam fashion
 stand,
And I see those shocks spread on and on, over all
 the land;
The scene is but a corner of perhaps a mighty
 field,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And a rail fence—though straightened out protects
and guards the yield.

There's a feeling in the atmosphere—there's a
crispness in the air—

Although I see and feel it, it could not be painted
there;

But the picture does suggest as much—and of course
the artist thought—

That between the rows of new-cut corn, you should
find the things you sought.

My mind goes back to when a boy—I see it even
now—

I see the blackish, sandy loam, curl from the moving
plow;

I see the boy with un-shod feet so blithely step
along—

I hear him yelling at the team, I hear his voice
in song.

But one suspender holds his pants—the lines o'er
body thrown—

With gee and haw he guides the team—the bay
mare and the roan.

'Round and 'round the land he goes—his short
steps never lag—

Until the plow is cast aside and he's ready for
the drag;

'Round and 'round again he goes—clods tumbling,
rolling yield—

And then before me vividly, I see a harrowed field.
Now night draws on. From 'yond the hill I hear
the cattle low—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Then I see them trailing down the lane—in Indian
file they go.
Now the plow-boy follows them—his tired team
slowly plugs—
And I hear the jangling harness—the tinkling of
the tugs.
Now he approaches where the cows with patience
calmly wait,
And I hear the creaking hinges, as he carries 'round
the gate.

I waken from my reverie and again the scene behold.
And tears drop from my eyelids, for I am getting
old—
And maybe sentimental or childish—'cause of
years;
I say I'm tender-hearted, thus accounting for my
tears.
But lately I have noticed, when I think of youth and
death,
More touching are the thoughts of youth, than of
age's dying breath.
But to the artist's picture—and through tears I
dimly see—
More than is on that painting or on any scenery.

I see the great, big, Autumn moon—so natural and
so cold—
Recollecting too, I never knew if of silver or of
gold;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But cold it always seemed to me—and now 'tis riding low—
And with the wind the shadows cast, move slowly to and fro.
In the twilight of descending night, nature's creations take,
Their places and the ascending moon paints reflections in the lake.
The trees—the now near leafless trees—their foliage have shed,
And on the wings of all the winds, to some destination fled,
Or on the ground, and nestling—clinging close to Mother Earth—
Preferring a grave from which they came, by the trees that gave them birth.
Riley's "Frost is on the pumpkin" and his "Fodder's in the shock"
I can hear his turkeys Kiwah and the gobble of the cock;
I see McCutcheon's Indians, for Indian Summer's come—
And I wonder, as so oft before, where the smoke is coming from.
There's a sure 'nough smell of burning leaves—I can almost see the glow—
As it glances from the pumpkins lighting up each shock and row.

O how I'd like to just go back and take that picture there—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

And to look up my old corn-field, and the likeness
then compare.
How I'd like to lean against the fence beside the
elder bush—
(And the reason for the longing is more than idle
wish)
For 'tis there that all the sentiment, more valuable
than gold—
And the treasures of my childhood, more loved
than could be told,
Lie buried twixt and round-about where I spent
my early days,
Where the sun of this old universe first on me shed
its rays.
It was there that golden sentiment—the first I
ever felt—
When beside my kneeling mother, I in silence hum-
bly knelt,
And listened to her speak those words—that were
just words to me—
And too, those words are planted there, and in
Eternity.
Yes I love that dear old picture; it has brought to
me so much—
With thoughts akin to reverence, I most reverently
touch.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

TO W. Z. S.

*Upon receipt of request for small donation to help
build church*

Your letter came—My dear old friend—
Requesting check, I don't intend
One moment to waste till my duty do—
So with this find small sum for you.

You read me right, dear W. Z.
And through your note your smile I see;
Once I had read—I understood
To do this thing would do me good.

I see you calmly sitting there—
Eyes cast afar, and tilted chair
Lends equilibrium 'midst the noise,
Of laughing children, as the boys
Whom you had known in days ago—
Through picturing eyes you looked upon
Their faces—those remembered best—
More than they knew with friendship blest.

What minds can tell—what words convey—
What causes us to feel that way—
When thoughts of home and severed ties,
Bring back to us sweet memories,

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Of that old town where you reside—
Of those departed—those who died—
Of old acquaintances—and youth;
To me it seems man's greatest Truth.

I hear e'en now those old church bells,
Their influential tone impels—
And draws even now as it did then
When we knew nought of life or men.

Year after year has swiftly flown—
And middle life dislikes to own,
To tell the truth about our age,
But life goes onward—page by page;
Cannot go back—can but review—
Too late—but we can start anew,
To each of us there is that chance
To don again our first long pants;
If I did this I'd sure neglect,
To do some things I'm doing yet.

Through all your note I see a drift—
It is not hard for me to sift,
As you read me I'm reading you—
I know the thing you're passing through;
You have divulged and knew it not,
Some things you thought had been forgot.

But sifting through the screens reveal
Those better thoughts—the ones you feel;
Those thoughts appear and really glow—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Far more than pen can ever show,
And sort of psychologic tell—
And suspended hang 'twixt heaven and hell;
To some extent I believe this thing
About us hovers on the wing.

There is a something telling me—
It floats about—I cannot see—
I cannot say I really hear,
But just the same, I know it's near.
It comes to me when somber mind
Dwells sadly on those left behind—
When I am sad, I am alone
My gayer thoughts for the moment flown,
For all I know into the skies
To make room for my memories.

It is a help—that sentiment—
Reminding of each good intent,
And each good deed done in our youth,
And graven with the words—the truth.
The bad deeds will have taught the mind,
And in each one a lesson find;
For to make a world—to make a man
Mis-steps begin where we began.

There is no doubt that to create,
We mingle love with kindred hate;
Ambition's goal—or earth's success—
Can come but to a few of us,
But a greater goal we all can reach
If each himself the lessons teach.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

This note may like a sermon sound—
If that can be then I am bound
To preach to you—I may not send—
I will not know until the end;
But after I have read it through—
And satisfied that it will do,
I'll put your name on its outside,
Consigned to you, my friend with pride.
'Tis but my thoughts addressed to you,
I shall not claim that they are true—
For unwise words, no record keep—
A two-edged sword cuts wide and deep.

Of your intentions you have told—
The intention is worth more than gold;
For to build a church or mountain move,
Is no small task—no doubt will prove.

But thousands scattered o'er the land—
The noblest structures build by hand
Of man—who with strengthened power—
Ultra-wealthy at less cower—
And buildings by whose munificence
Fade to insignificance.

I am glad to see the interest taken,
And hope you may all others waken
To do their mite, for your good cause,
That keeps alive our oldest laws.
Yes let religion hold the lead
That it has held—and will indeed

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Forever and anon the pace,
For there is none to take its place.

Ben Franklin said to Thomas Paine—
"If I were you, I would refrain—
I do not know, but I have doubt
That you know what you talk about."
Seems strange that logical man,
Could see no Christ as we all can—
"The world is bad with churches about,
What would it be if it were without."

TO JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Upon his death Sunday 1916

Of you the solemn truth is told—
In words so cruel, in type so bold
And harsh—although it tells
More sweetly than could tolling bells,
That you have gone whence music came
To guide your pen and to inflame,
A mind which filled with love
Has but returned to its place above.

Your mind contained divinest powers—
You saw the fields and birds and flowers,
And little children, the grass and June;
And a singing voice that sounds in tune.
In every rhyme that you ever wrote,
Music sounded in every note
As if bees and bugs of the atmosphere,
Droned and hummed 'round your musical ear.

How selfish is the human heart,
That with regret sees you depart;
If this be weakness we lay claim,
And proud are we to bear the blame
Of loving and of missing you—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

The man so rare, the kind so few.
'Tis not for man by work alone
To sow the kind of seed you've sown.

Tales were told by your ready pen,
That stood you apart from other men
Who also wrote, for you understood
The kind of verse that did folks good.
Your homely verse and dialect rhyme
Will ring and sing down the halls of time;
I doubt old friend if a thousand years
Will hush the laughs and dry the tears.

How little are you by death removed,
With scarce an effort I have proved—
And beside the shelving I now stand
With Poems of Riley in my hand.
And so if I wish I will talk to you,
I will know your deeds and what you do—
You cannot then be far away,
If we can visit every day.

God gave me tears for such as you—
And I have wept, and very few
Who knew you well but with saddened breath,
Are mourning for their friend in death.
You made and perfected a plan
That you might speak to surviving man;
And O what work could be more fine,
Than your "An Old Sweetheart Of Mine."

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Sleep on for you, your rest have earned—
That which you taught millions have learned;
And future generations will,
When your pen and voice have long been still,
Among the nation's honored place,
In the hall of fame your name and face;
And long, long years when we are dead
With appreciation will your works be read.

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

O leave me the power to think as my portion
And I will lay down all that riches has brought;
Leave me—O leave me that far greater fortune—
That wonderful power—The power of thought.

How oft I have mused when in deepest depression;
How oft I have gazed through eyes that were
sad;
At the shadows so clearly in dark retrospection,
But thanks for the power—the power I had.

I give thanks for the power, O what consolation
When I think of the loved ones—the ones up
above;
O wealthy I am for the great contemplation—
The sweetest of musings for the ones that I love.

How I grieved when my mother, my dear sainted
mother
Was taken at last to her last resting place;
I wept as I never could weep for another,
But still I see clearly her dear motherly face.

The loss tells the value in my own recollection
How great was my loss that I'll never more
know;

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

Yet undying the blessing of sweetest reflection—
The greatest of treasures we have here below.

Where there is no loss there is no compensation—
No power to see the things not understood;
But where there is love there is representation,
And our balm is our memory, a power for good.

O take from me wealth and each earthly possession,
But leave me O God the power of thought;
I ask for so little, still the greatest concession—
Allow me to think as Thy power has taught.

While I'm here—still on earth—O never deprive
me!
Take wealth and near ones and all of my friends;
But leave me that power that I may stay nigh
Thee,
And the knee and memory in thankfulness bends.

WHEN I USED TO GO TO SCHOOL

How I wish that I had studied—when I used to
go to school—
Then I wouldn't need to feel that I am just a sort
o' tool;
Do this—do that—get this job done—and do it
just this way—
Is all I hear—is all I do—just what the others say.

I used to run away from school—when I was
'bout your age—
And used to feel—just as you say—like cooped
up in a cage;
I didn't like my teachers—they had it in for me—
And they never learned me nothin'—as far as I
could see.

I learned to write a little—and I sort o' learned to
read—
But I never learned to figure much—there wasn't
any need—
I would always think o' fishin'—or a lookin' at it
snow—
But now I sort o' miss those things—the things I
do not know.

One thing I know—I do not know—I never was
a fool—

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

But I come nigh to bein' one—when I used to go
to school—

It must be satisfyin'-like—to know enough to
know—

All by yourself—so positive—and know it's really
so.

My children used to come to me—for one thing or
another—

I would take one glance—then usually—I'd send
them to their mother—

I used to get embarrassed—and always 'fraid they'd
ask—

If I'd do a sum—or spell a word—or some such
awful task.

I think I know a lot o' things—but when they're
talkin' school—

I know then what I do not know—and I'm just
an awful fool—

So go to school and study—learn every thing you
can—

Don't be like me—a sort o' tool—learn how to be
a man.

THE FERTILE FIELD

If you are willing and mean to be,
And to do a thing of worth—
Then list to me and try to see,
Your share of mental earth.

With brush and canvas you have a start,
Great masters had no more;
And pen and pad or other art,
Here lies your stock and store.

I have no doubt for pick and spade,
That gold and silver shine;
In that broad valley wealth is laid,
Or on the hills recline.

Great magnitude in gems, so rare—
Lie sparkling in the sun;
But to unthinkers, none are there,
No, not a single one.

Most wonderful land of mystery,
Is this fertile field of thought;
And it remains our legacy,
Unbartered and unbought.

Captain Squires' Commonoddities

All great men who cared and dared,
Who honor and fortune wrought;
Have worked with patience and prepared
Upon this field of thought.

But he who would have quality,
Must keep down tare and weed;
And plough deep with sincerity,
Then sow the best of seed.

Then cultivate, to get good yield,
Great crops you will induce;
To grow and prosper in this great field,
Great deeds it will produce.

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